ENTERTAINMENT / A2-1

Filipino-American comedian wants to Rex you up

ACROSS / A15

Farmers' organizer killed in Negros

METRO / A19

'Doctor to the stars' Joel Mendez files P10-M libel suit against patient

WORLD / A22

Iran warns US: Thousands of suicide bombers at the ready

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, April 18, 2006 ★★ 4 sections / Vol. 21 / No. 129 P18 website: www.inq7.net

Manila judge sentences 4 kidnappers to death

By Tina G. Santos
Metro

TWO DAYS AFTER PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo announced that all death row convicts would be spared from execution, a Manila judge sentenced four men to die by lethal injection after they were found guilty of kidnapping a businesswoman nine years ago.

MANILA/ A8

Teachers told: Relearn English on 'Sesame St.'

...CAN YOU TELL ME HOW TO GET TO SESAME STREET...

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI N. Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—THE EDUcational TV show "Sesame Street" has helped children around the world learn their ABCs for generations, so President Macapagal-

TEACHERS/ A6

Legal experts: GMA ignoring SC, Congress

President set to endorse bill ending death penalty

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr. and Christine O. Avendaño

AFTER ANNOUNCING that she was commuting all death sentences to life terms, President Macapagal-Arroyo will next endorse a bill in Congress seeking to abolish the death penalty.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye yesterday said Ms Arroyo would push for the repeal of Republic Act No. 7659 (the Death Penalty Law), "if necessary," to further advance "the forgiveness and compassion" that she wanted to extend with her Easter message of commutation.

But Andres Bautista, dean of the Far Eastern University Institute of Law, said the commutation was an affront to the Supreme Court and Congress because it ran roughshod over the principle of separation of powers among the three branches of government.

"The move is constitutionally questionable, and the President's legal team should rethink this plan," Bautista, who also chairs the Philippine Association of Law Schools, told the INQUIRER.

"Congress makes the laws; the

LEGAL EXPERTS/ A6

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS

THE CHAMBER OF DEATH at the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa was bathed in the eerie glare of publicity as it awaited to claim its first death row convict Leo Echegaray 13 years ago. Echegaray, who was found guilty of raping his stepdaughter, was the first to die by lethal injection. PDI PHOTO

GMA lone abstention in Senate 13 years ago

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE DEATH PENALTY IS ONE ISsue that has bugged President Macapagal-Arroyo since her days in the Senate.

First, she voted against the death penalty bill when it was up for approval in the 9th Congress when she was a senator. Then, when the day of reckoning came to vote on the life-and-death measure which became Republic Act No. 7659, Ms Arroyo cast the lone abstention.

Now 13 years later as President, and after initially threatening kidnappers with lethal injection, Ms Arroyo has courted both approval and outrage with her decision to commute all death sentences to life imprisonment, a move that has practically rendered capital punishment moot.

Ms Arroyo showed she was torn between her conscience and political considerations.

This much she admitted when she explained why she had abstained when Senate Committee Report No. 20 on the death penalty bill was submitted for approval on third reading on Aug. 16, 1993.

In the end, the politically astute daughter of the late President Diosdado Macapagal chose to follow the dictates of her conscience.

"Mr. (Senate) President, I am torn between a constituency that cannot be denied and a con-

GMA LONE/ A6

Crime victims threaten use of 'eye-for-an-eye' revenge

By Jocelyn R. Uy
in Manila
and Carla P. Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

CRIME VICTIMS AND THEIR RELatives may resort to the revenge principle of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" to deal with President Macapagal-Arroyo's announced commutation of all death sentences to life terms, an anti-crime advocate warned yesterday.

Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption chair Dante Jimenez said his office had been "deluged" with phone calls and text messages from survivors of heinous crimes and their families, threatening to employ judicial "shortcuts" in the maximum-security compound at the New Bilibid Prisons (NBP) in Muntinlupa City.

"In their helplessness and desperation, they are threatening to resort to other justice alternatives," Jimenez told the INQUIRER.

He particularly cited two phone calls, which he described as "angry, bitter and hurting," from relatives of a murder and rape victim, disclosing a plan to hire hit men inside the NBP to "liquidate" the killers of their loved ones.

"We do not condone this act ... The [prison] authorities should double their security and be alert to this grim possibility," Jimenez said.

He said witnesses to crimes also expressed wariness at Ms Arroyo's announcement of commutation, saying that if death convicts were granted pardons or were paroled in the process, their lives and the security of their families would be at risk.

Jimenez said he was urging all those feeling aggrieved to be calm and to visit the VACC office "so we can discuss this recent development."

In Bacolod City, businesswoman Teresita Cokin, whose sister Roberta was kidnapped and killed in 1995, said: "I am deeply hurt by and disappointed in the

CRIME/ A8

Diving sites place RP in world's top 3

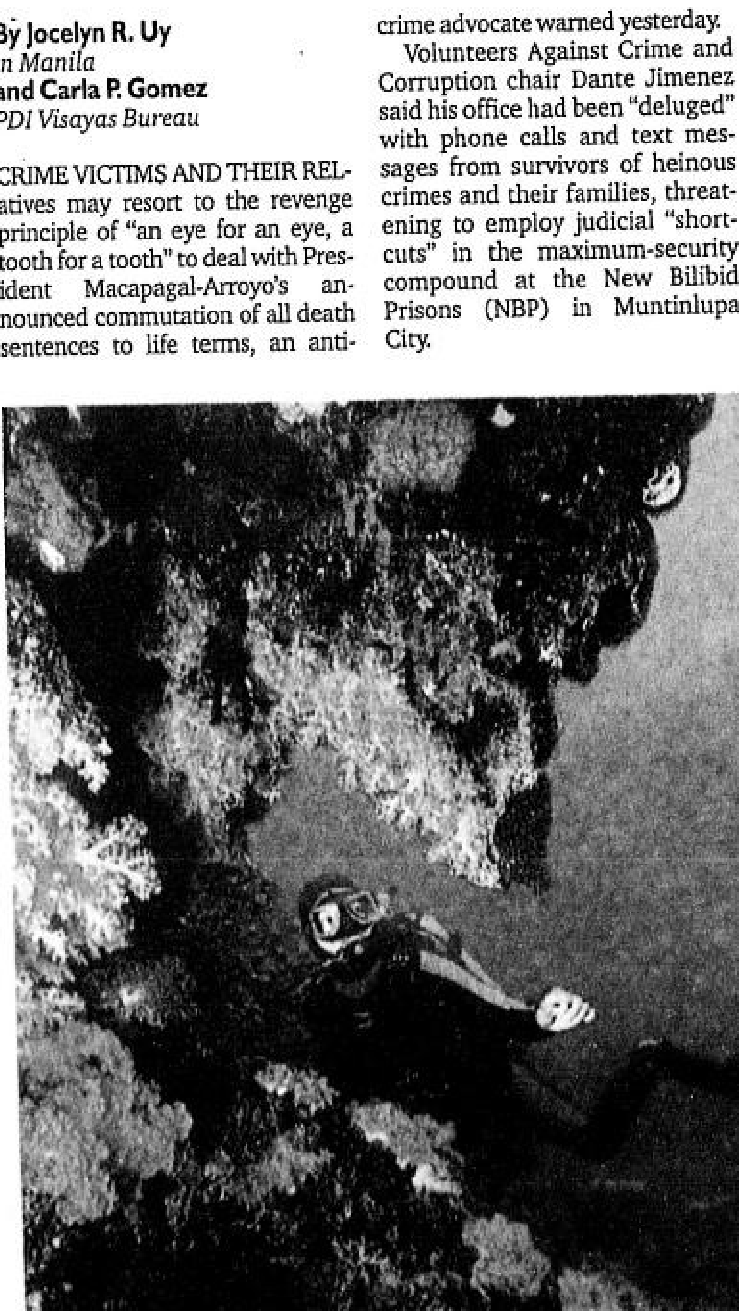
DIVE SPOTS IN THE PHILIPpines were again given international recognition as among the world's best at the recent 2006 Marine Diving Fair (MDF) in Tokyo, according to the Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA).

PTA General Manager Robert Dean Barbers said that although the country placed third, after Maldives and Palau, it was ahead of Thailand, Hawaii, and the South Pacific and Caribbean islands, all of which boast well-known dive sites.

"We're very, very fortunate to be given recognition and honor," said Barbers, who received the award in behalf of the country during rites at the MDF exhibition area in Tokyo's Ikebukuro district on April 7.

Among the Philippine dive sites exhibited at the MDF were the Tubbataha Reef in the Sulu Sea, which is famous for its variety and density of marine life; Malapascua in Cebu, known for its rare sharks, and Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro, noted for its colorful corals, strong currents and big fish.

DIVING/ A10



BALICASAG ISLAND, BOHOL, was among the diving spots cited during Asia's largest scuba diving and beach resort exhibition held in Tokyo, Japan, last week. YVETTE LEE

Military keeps report secret; Biazon says soldiers alarmed

By Dona Pazzibugan, TJ Burgonio and Philip C. Tubeza

THE MILITARY IS KEEPING SEcret its report that cleared ranking officers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the so-called "Hello Garci" election cheating scandal despite its promises of disclosure and warnings in the Senate of continued restiveness in the ranks.

"They will continue to be agitated, they will continue to be dismayed," said Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, referring to officers who had threatened last year to go on mass leave unless the involvement of generals in alleged cheating during the 2004 presidential election was investigated.

At a news conference yesterday, Biazon read text messages from Marine officers criticizing the report that cleared the generals mentioned in the wiretapped conversations purportedly between President Macapagal-Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano.

The opposition has claimed the tapes showed Ms Arroyo stole the 2004 election—a charge the President has vigorously denied but which would not go away.

"Based on these text messages, many know about [the] election cheating," said Biazon, chair of the Senate committee on defense and security which is investigating the wiretapping controversy.

Military spokespersons said yesterday it was up to Navy chief Vice

MILITARY/ A6

Fil-Ams re-embrace native land

By Volt Contreras

YOU'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT the "brain drain," the bittersweet rise in the numbers of overseas workers, and the alarming statistics on Filipinos wanting to leave the country for lack of jobs or sheer loss of hope.

But a different sentiment prevails every Friday afternoon at the Philippine Center Social Hall in San Francisco, California.

There, at around 3 p.m., the country is re-embraced by its sons and daughters who are living the American Dream.

The Philippine consulate in San Francisco yesterday said it administered the oath of allegiance on April 7 alone to "over a hundred former Filipinos" who had opted for dual citizenship, thanks to a 2003 Philippine law.

Consul General Ma. Rowena Mendoza Sanchez called this development a form of "reverse migration" among Filipino-Americans.

Mendoza proudly noted that the April 7 batch included a Filipino-American couple who, with their regained Filipino citizenship, "plan to build a luxury hotel in Aklan," the province where the world-famous resort island of Boracay is located.

The diplomat was referring to

FIL-AMS/ A10

Second FrontPage

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Extreme Northern Luzon will experience mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers. Eastern and Southern Mindanao will have mostly cloudy skies with rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms. The rest of the country will be partly cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

COMPILED BY KATE PEDROSO, PDI RESEARCH/04/17/06 SOURCE PAGASA

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

Driver to face new probe in Subic rape

DOJ wants to charge him as US soldiers' accomplice

By Armand N. Nocum

THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT will conduct a new preliminary investigation into the Subic rape case to determine whether the driver of the four United States servicemen accused of raping a 22-year-old Filipina should be indicted.

GONZALEZ

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez made the recommendation to investigate Timoteo Soriano in a resolution of the petitions for review filed by the accused Keith Silkwood, Daniel Smith, Dominic Duplantis and Chad Carpentier—which he will be releasing today.

"I ordered the conduct of a new preliminary investigation. [Soriano] could have been charged as an accomplice. He is the driver and he must have known [what happened]," Gonzalez said.

A lawyer for the victim last week filed a petition before the Court of Appeals asking that the driver be reinstated as one of the accused.

In a petition for certiorari, lawyer Evelyn Ursua said Olongapo City Regional Trial Court Judge Renato Dilag had committed grave abuse of discretion when he dismissed the rape case against Soriano on Jan. 13, 2006.

Soriano was earlier indicted as a co-accused in the case after it was alleged that he intentionally drove the van slowly and took a long route to give Smith more time to allegedly "sexually ravish the victim."

On February 10, Dilag dismissed the appeal filed by Olongapo prosecutor Prudencio Jalandoni.

As this developed, Gonzalez has reconstituted a new panel of prosecutors to handle the prosecution of the rape case now pending before the Makati City Regional Trial Court Branch 139.

Two Olongapo prosecutors have been retained—Jalandoni and Olongapo assistant chief prosecutor Raymund Viray. The two handled the preliminary investigation phase shortly after the victim filed an affidavit of complaint on Nov. 3, 2005.

The other members of the panel are: Makati City Prosecutor Feliciano Aspi, chair, senior state prosecutor Emilie Fe de los Santos, and Makati assistant chief prosecutor Christopher Garvida.

Gonzalez cited "interest of [the] service" and "provisions of existing laws" as the bases for the creation of the new panel.

The victim alleged that she was raped on Nov. 1 inside a moving van at the Subic Bay Freeport where the four US servicemen had been on furlough after joining war exercises in Luzon.

The Olongapo City court stopped handling the case in late March after the defense filed a motion for Dilag's inhibition, claiming that Dilag's son used to be an associate in a law firm defending Carpentier.

The Supreme Court later approved the separate requests of Gonzalez and the woman's lawyers to transfer the case out of Olongapo City as the three remaining judges there were either due for retirement, remained suspended or had a relative working as an associate for the defense lawyer of another accused serviceman. *With a report from Tonette Orejas, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

'Study now, pay never'

By Alcuin Papa

A LAWMAKER HAS ACCUSED THE Commission on Higher Education (CHEd) of bungling the government's Study Now Pay Later Plan (SNPLP) to help poor students get a college education, after the agency posted a measly 1-percent repayment rate in the past decade.

At the last hearing on CHEd's budget in the House of Representatives, Rep. Joey Salceda, chair of the committee on appropriations, said CHEd's administration of the SNPLP had gone from bad to worse, dubbing it the "Study Now Pay Never" program.

Citing a study conducted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco), Salceda said that since 1995, only one percent of the students who availed themselves of SNPLP loans had paid them back.

He said the 1-percent repayment rate was even lower than the 3-percent rate posted after CHEd began administering the program in 1992-94.

46-percent rate

Salceda said this was in stark contrast to the 46-percent repayment rate achieved by the government financial institutions that administered the SNPLP from 1976 to 1991.

CHEd allocates P374 million annually to help around 30,000 poor students get a college education.

Of the amount, P363.1 million, or 97 percent, goes to scholarships and grant programs, while the remaining P11.7 million goes to student loan programs, particularly the SNPLP, Salceda said.

He said "the reason CHEd allocates fewer funds to the student loan programs is the agency's failure to collect repayment from previous borrowers."

Salceda said the government should go after the deadbeat graduates in order to obtain more funds to lend to succeeding deserving students.

To this end, the congressman filed House Bill No. 5315 which seeks to collect the money owed by the program's beneficiaries. He said he hoped the bill would "develop and strengthen the value of accountability and responsibility to pay loans."

The CHEd, meanwhile, has refused to comment on Salceda's statements.

What for?

An aide of CHEd Executive Secretary William Medrano identified as Sol Logo told off reporters trying to get the agency's side. After claiming that Medrano was in a meeting, Logo told reporters, "Why do you have to know (about the 1-percent repayment rate)?"

CHEd Chair Carlito Puno, according to his executive assistant Edcel Miguel, was also in a meeting.

Erap renews poll challenge to GMA

DEPOSED PRESIDENT Estrada has renewed his challenge for President Macapagal-Arroyo to run against him in a snap election to supposedly settle the issue of her legitimacy.

ESTRADA

Estrada, who is under "rest house arrest" while on trial plunder charges, said in a statement that the President was obviously afraid of running in a snap election in which she might face him.

Citing recent surveys showing Estrada with a 48 percent trust rating, Estrada's spokesperson Didagen Dilangalen said Estrada would only be responding to public clamor if he were to run against Ms Arroyo in a snap poll.

"Our position [has] never changed. President Estrada's removal from office and the coup d'etat that caused it, were unconstitutional and therefore he remains the rightful President," Dilangalen said.

After Estrada talked last week of leading the opposition in a snap election, First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo called him a hypocrite who was salivating for a second term in Malacañang.

Ilocos Sur Governor Luis "Chavit" Singson, the government's main witness in the plunder charges against Estrada, said the idea of Estrada's running for President again was "ridiculous."

The Sandiganbayan Special Division yesterday granted Estrada's request to be allowed to hear Mass tomorrow, his 69th birthday, in a church near the antigraft court before going on to a hearing on his case.

The court said it was granting Estrada's motion as Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio had posed no objection to it and the Philippine National Police had given assurances that it could adequately secure the disgraced leader.

It stressed, however, that Estrada and his well-wishers would be subject to the security measures imposed by the PNP.

It also restricted the use of communications and electronic devices and tightened the rules on media interviews for the duration of Estrada's stay at the St. Peter's church.

Estrada will be taken to the church on Commonwealth Avenue at 7 a.m. from his Tanay rest house. After the Mass, he is to be immediately brought to the Sandiganbayan. *Nelson F. Flores*

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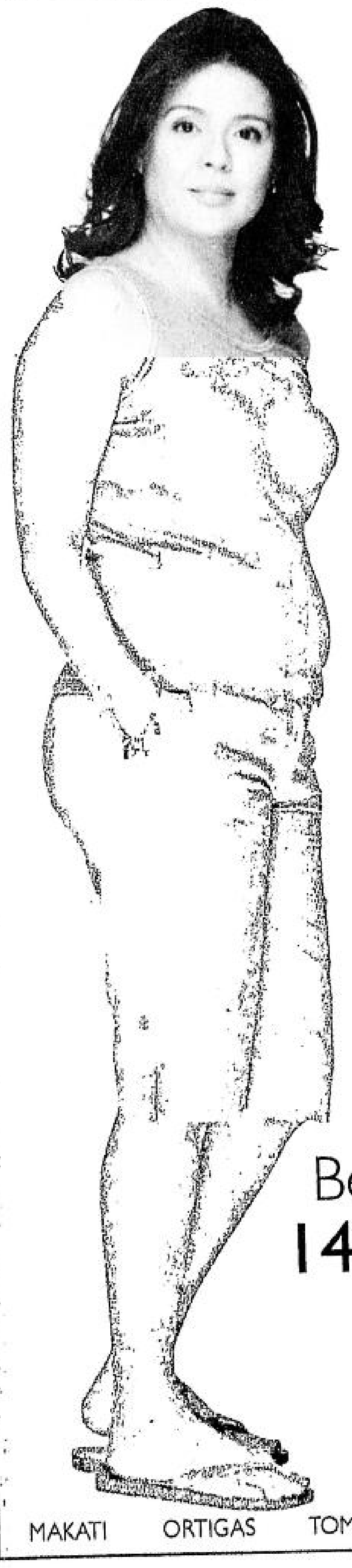

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GMA's Vicky Morales with Philippine Army Chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon, Jr.
Willie Revillame wows the crowd with games and prizes
Myla Villanueva (MDI Group Holdings) and Banayat (Phil. Air Force Officers' Ladies Club)
Presidential Consultant for Entrepreneurship Joey Concepcion III gives a welcome address

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A message from

Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship and **PLDT** INQUIRER

18 Pinoy miners land in Saudi jail over missing gold

By Volt Contreras

EIGHTEEN FILIPINO MINERS HAVE BEEN DETAINED since last week in Jeddah on allegations that they stole from their company's stockpile of gold, the Department of Foreign Affairs reported yesterday.

The miners employed by the Saudi Arabian Mining Co. were held for investigation on suspicions of theft after several pieces of melted gold, bags of rocks and soil, and melting paraphernalia were found in their living quarters during an inspection, a DFA official said.

The company, whose crew was mostly composed of Filipinos, had expressed "surprise" over the incident considering that the suspects have long been employed in the firm, the official said, citing an April 11 report from the Philippine Consulate in Jeddah.

In the report, the firm also pointed out how it takes care of its Filipino employees by giving them bonuses, paying them on time, providing them with dining and recreation facilities, and allowing them to hold get-together parties each month.

The official said the department would be hiring a lawyer for the Filipinos once needed. He said the Saudi police would usually round up a big number of suspects and by the process of elimination, find the real perpetrators.

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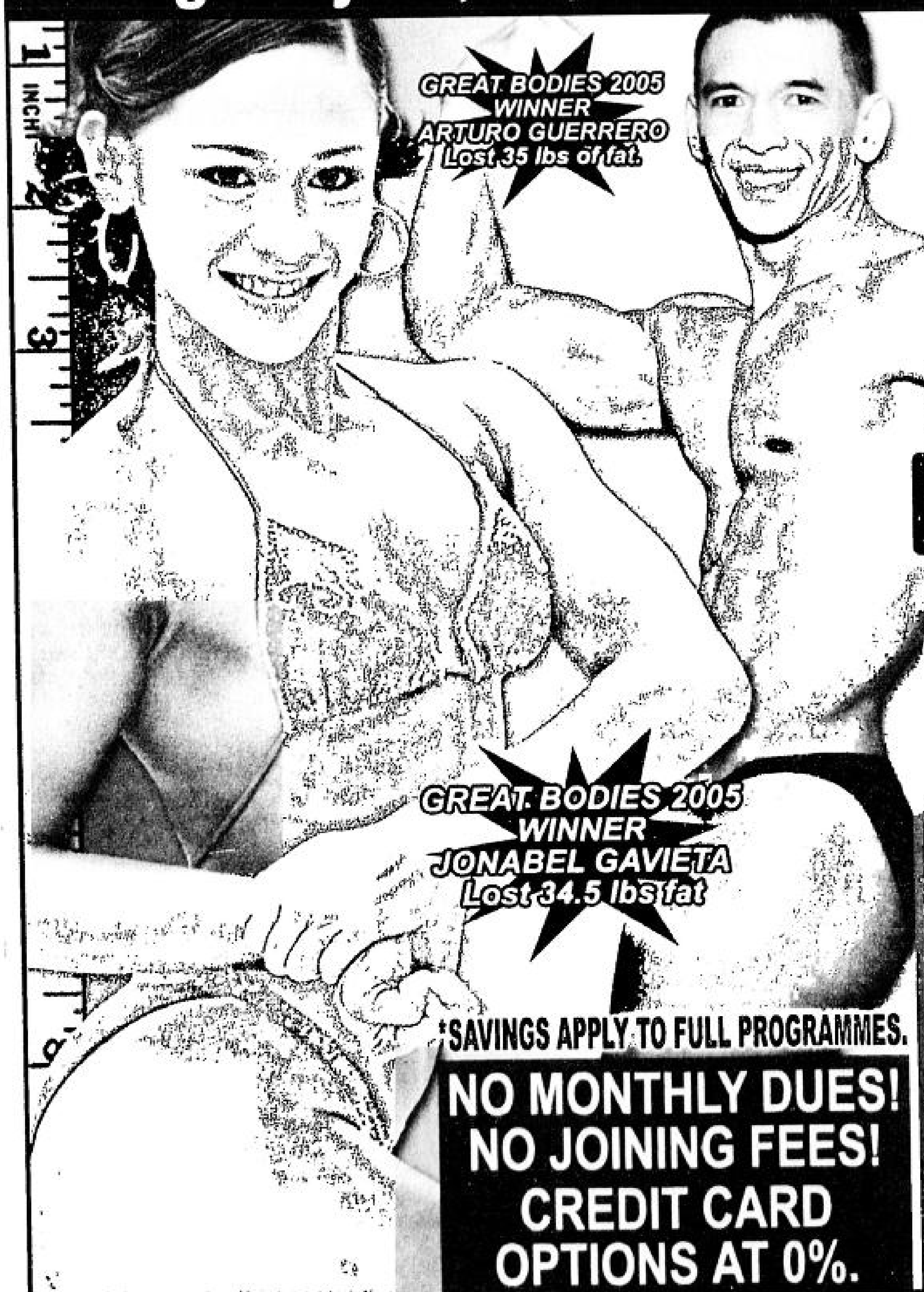
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Legal experts: GMA ignoring high court, Congress

From page A1

President only implements them. By law, the President is compelled to implement RA 7659 until it is repealed. She cannot just disregard Congress," he said.

In a speech before international journalists in February, Ms Arroyo declared her intention to abolish the death penalty because it went against her Catholic beliefs.

RA 7659 was enacted by Congress in 1994 to stop the rise in heinous crimes. It made the Philippines one among 91 countries implementing capital punishment.

An endorsement by the President is expected to jump-start the legislation of numerous anti-RA 7659 bills that have languished in Congress because of lack of support.

Case-to-case basis

While Ms Arroyo can grant pardons under the law, this power is limited to a case-to-case basis, to be applied only when there is a flaw in the system, and to be exercised in cases where the Supreme Court had made a final judgment, Bautista said.

"The President has clearly shown complete disregard of the Supreme Court in her decision to summarily move to commute all death penalties to life imprisonment," he said.

The only precedent Bautista could think of would be a general amnesty given by a state leader.

"But an amnesty involves giving clemency to rebels jailed for their beliefs, not rapists, murderers, kidnappers and drug [dealers]," he said.

Bunye, himself a lawyer, pointed out that the President was not forgiving or letting death convicts go.

"She is just making them serve the next lower penalty," he said.

But Bautista said that while Ms Arroyo might have decided to make the move on her own, "she did not get proper legal advice from those who are supposed to guide her on legal matters."

Bunye, however, was willing to stake his lawyer's license that "the right given to the President is very clear under the Constitution."

"That is a constitutional right. I believe the President based her action on the constitutional provision. Her action is constitutionally justifiable. We understand the feelings of the victims, but they can rest assured those serving sentences will complete their sentences," he said.

Bunye also said Ms Arroyo carefully studied the matter before making it the focal point of her Easter message: "She knew the different implications of her decision; she's taking responsibility. We hope that we will not mix this with politics."

Conflicting statements

Bunye and Michael Defensor, the President's chief of staff, yesterday gave conflicting statements on how Ms Arroyo's new policy would be implemented.

Bunye said a death sentence would be commuted to a life term once a "final judgment" on the case had been made, suggesting an automatic commutation.

But Defensor said a death sentence would be commuted "if and when" the Department of Justice made such a recommendation.

"All I'm saying is that it's going to be qualified, not automatic," Defensor told reporters.

He said that aside from pursuing her "personal conviction," Ms Arroyo used as the "basis" for her decision a DOJ study given to her some three weeks ago.

Bunye said it was "clear that the intent of the President" was to commute death sentences.

"If you are convicted by final judgment and the penalty is death, the case with final judgment is subject to commutation," he said.

He also said Ms Arroyo was "effectively" stopping executions at her level.

Each case is unique

But Defensor said there was still a need for the DOJ to submit a final recommendation to the President on whether a death sentence should be commuted.

He said this was because each case, as well as the condition or circumstance of the death convict, was unique.

Asked what would be the DOJ's basis for making a recommendation, Defensor listed the nature of the crime and the convict's age, condition and mental state, among other things.

"She's not doing it out of politics; that's her personal stand," Defensor said, pointing out that Ms Arroyo had always taken a position against the death penalty since she was a senator. *(Story on Page A1.)*

Defensor also told reporters at the Teachers Camp in Baguio City that the DOJ had started reviewing the cases of over 1,000 death convicts.

"For example, a convict was sentenced for drug possession and he is 80 years old. I suppose he would be entitled to have his death sentence commuted to life imprisonment," Defensor said.

"But in the case of kidnapping or drugs, the DOJ will have to make an assessment. It wouldn't be right if death convicts who are still active, still strong, suddenly have their sentences commuted," he said.

Defensor said Ms Arroyo's move was "not an illegal act."

"This is a power given to the President. We recognize that while the death penalty is the policy, we also [rely] on her powers ... [which are] allowed by the Constitution," he said.

4-year moratorium

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the President's decision had in effect put in place a four-year moratorium on the death penalty.

"There will be no execution of death convicts under President Arroyo's term. Effectively, there is a moratorium until 2010. She does not want to send someone to lethal injection," Gonzalez told reporters.

"There is a moratorium in carrying out the death sentence, but it does not prevent the courts from imposing the death penalty," he added.

Like Defensor, Gonzalez defended the legality of Ms Arroyo's move.

"The President's action is an exercise of her power as mandated by the Constitution," he said, citing Article 7, Section 19.

The law provides that "except in cases of impeachment, or as otherwise provided in this Constitution, the President may grant reprieves, commutations and pardons, and remit fines and forfeitures, after conviction by final judgment."

But Gonzalez clarified that technically, only 98 death row convicts would benefit from the President's decision.

He said that of the 98 convicts, 80 had had their cases affirmed with finality by the Supreme Court, while 18 already had "warrants of execution."

Challenge

At the House, Minority Leader Francis Escudero called on Ms Arroyo to immediately certify as urgent pending House bills seeking the repeal of RA 7659.

"If indeed this [commutation of death sentences] is not a simple political ploy, a temporary move motivated by her desire to survive the political crisis, then we challenge her to certify as urgent the bills calling for the repeal of the Death Penalty Law," he said at a press conference.

Escudero said Ms Arroyo had succeeded in forcing the House to vote for the unpopular expanded value-added tax, junk the impeachment complaints against her and pass the controversial antiterror bill.

"Why not use her clout for this?" said Escudero, one of the authors of the bills proposing life imprisonment as the maximum penalty for those convicted of heinous crimes. *With reports from Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Armand N. Nocum, Michael Lim Ubac, Juliet Labog-Javellana and Cynthia D. Balana in Manila*

Teachers told: ...

From page A1

Arroyo is asking teachers to watch the program so they could relearn the basics of the English language.

The President yesterday directed government television station NBN (National Broadcasting Network) to broadcast the English proficiency lessons, now being taught all over the country to 37,000 selected teachers, to help the rest of the country's 450,000 teachers access modern language courses that are otherwise too expensive to take.

Ms Arroyo said she even had a catchy name for the proposed TV series, "Teleserye Para Kay Ma'am," when she visited the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) at the Teachers Camp here.

The NEAP developed the new language refresher programs.

At dinner she hosted on Saturday for reporters here, the President said retraining teachers in English increased the odds for Filipino students to survive the realities of globalization.

Declining proficiency

She said English was the language used to effectively communicate Math and Science and many teachers see the declining proficiency of Filipino students in these subjects as a sign that literacy in the country was deteriorating.

The results of the National Elementary Achievement Tests for school year 1999-2000 showed elementary school graduates scoring below 50 percent in Math (45.69 percent) and Science (48.61 percent).

The language modules to be telecast over the NBN were designed by the NEAP as courses that would run for two consecutive summer breaks. These are equivalent to 36 units of course credits.

First batch of trainees

At its launch, the NEAP was training teachers who obtained high scores in preliminary evaluation examinations conducted by the Department of Education.

The academy is subsidizing the first batch of trainees, who are expected to "echo" the modules to teachers in the provinces.

Alice Pañares, NEAP deputy director, said televising courses was "just one step in expanding access to the English proficiency training [programs] asked by Ms Arroyo."

Pañares said courses were being packaged as DVDs (digital video discs) and as audiotapes for communities reached only by radio. The government is also producing courses online. A set of taped courses will be released to regional training offices.

GMA lone abstention in Senate 13 years ago

From page A1

science that cannot be rationalized," she said as shown by the records of the Senate.

Conscience vs constituency

"If I vote yes, as seems to be the overwhelming clamor of my significant constituencies, I shall be voting against my conscience. If I vote no, as my personal syllogism concludes for me, I will be untrue to the obligation to be the voice in the Senate of those who are the source of my mandate and my very right to be in this hall to vote on this bill," she had said.

"Torn between conscience and constituency, Mr. President, I hereby abstain on Senate Bill No. 891," she said.

She recalled how her father was bothered by his conscience when he implemented the death penalty law he inherited from the previous administration.

"When the first death row case was submitted to him for confirmation and he gave it, and the execution was carried out, for weeks his conscience bothered him and caused him many sleepless nights and never did he ever confirm a death penalty again," she said.

New Testament

Ms Arroyo said the death penalty violated the right to life and the New Testament teaching to "love thy enemy" and God's commandment that "thou shall not kill."

She said justice in the democratic system meant rehabilitating the offender and not exacting revenge. She said these were the reasons she voted no the first time.

"Between that vote and today, a crescendo has arisen among significant sectors of my constituency calling on me to change my vote," she said. They pointed to the "sickening example of heinous crimes" that had terrorized the country at the time, she added.

In a separate voting, she referred specifically to the Chinese-Filipino community whose members were the traditional victims of kidnappers.

When the bill was presented for approval on second reading, Ms Arroyo voted against it.

Catholic education

She explained that it was due to her respect for human rights and her Catholic education that made it "difficult to grapple with the thought of allowing a man to be put to death."

But she said she also heard the cries of many of her constituents, especially the Chinese-Filipino community, who expected her support.

"So it is really a very difficult issue that we are grappling with, and this humble representation is having that great difficulty," she said.

Senate records showed the third reading vote was 17-4, but come ratification time, nine senators voted yes. They were Edgardo Angara, Agapito Aquino, Neptali Gonzales, Ernesto Herrera, Ernesto Maceda, Orlando Mercado, Blas Ople, Alberto Romulo and Arturo Tolentino.

The six who voted no were Heherson Alvarez, Jose Lina Jr., John Osmeña, Raul Roco, Wigberto Tañada and Francisco Tatad.

Military keeps report ...

From page A1

Admiral Mateo Mayuga, head of the five-member fact-finding board, to release in full the report consisting of 15 pages and a foot-thick annex of testimonies of 70 resource persons.

Confidential information

But Mayuga has said the panel's report—turned in officially to AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga months ago—was a "secret" document due to the "confidential information" given by witnesses.

On the evening of April 12 during the Lenten break, Mayuga read a two-page summary of the panel's findings over state television NBN-4, ignoring media calls and text messages. The INQUIRER later learned he gave a telephone interview to The Associated Press hours before his broadcast.

Contacted by the INQUIRER, AFP Public Information Office chief Col. Tristan Kison and AFP spokesperson Maj. Gen. Jose Angel Honrado could not explain why Mayuga was keeping the report secret.

Cleared were Army chief Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., Southern Command chief Maj. Gen. Gabriel Habacon and retired Lt. Gen. Roy Kyamko, who were mentioned in the tapes as being part of the alleged cheating conspiracy.

The Mayuga panel also cleared a fourth general, retired Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani, who was described as sympathetic to the opposition. He was inexplicably relieved as brigade commander during the crucial canvassing of votes.

Lomibao, Ebdane not probed

Police Director General Arturo Lomibao and his predecessor, now Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane, were also mentioned in the tapes but they were not investigated.

The panel absolved the military of allegations it was used by Ms Arroyo to rig the 2004 balloting.

According to Mayuga, not one of the resource persons interviewed linked the four generals or the nearly 300 soldiers deputized as members of the Board of Election Inspectors to election cheating.

Mayuga refused to identify the 70 resource persons, including 60 officers, eight enlisted personnel, a civilian AFP employee and a Comelec official. Among the officers were three lieutenant generals, three major generals and six brigadier generals.

Mayuga said the panel recommended "further investigation" of certain officers for "unprofessional conduct."

He gave no details but sources said they included two colonels and a captain, one of whom campaigned for a party-list group, another for a local candidate while another allegedly tried to bribe a ranking election official.

Why was Garci not probed?

On March 23, Mayuga said the panel interviewed troops from the First Marine Brigade based in Marawi City.

He claimed the Marines did not report any irregularities in the national elections. He said they only complained that local candidates blamed them whenever they lost.

But Biazon said some Marine officers and men based in Marawi, who had been listed as possible resource persons, were never invited to the official inquiry. He also said one Marine text message asked why Garcillano was not questioned by the Mayuga team.

Biazon, a former AFP chief of staff, said he had written Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz Jr. to ask for a copy of the full Mayuga report.

On March 3, Cruz said he would recommend to Malacañang that a copy of the Mayuga report be given to Congress, since the Senate and House of Representatives were conducting separate inquiries into the "Hello Garci" scandal.

Malacañang apparently rejected the idea. On April 11, it gave the go-signal to release the report. But the President's chief of staff, Michael Defensor, preempted the AFP by announcing that the report had cleared the four "Hello Garci" generals.

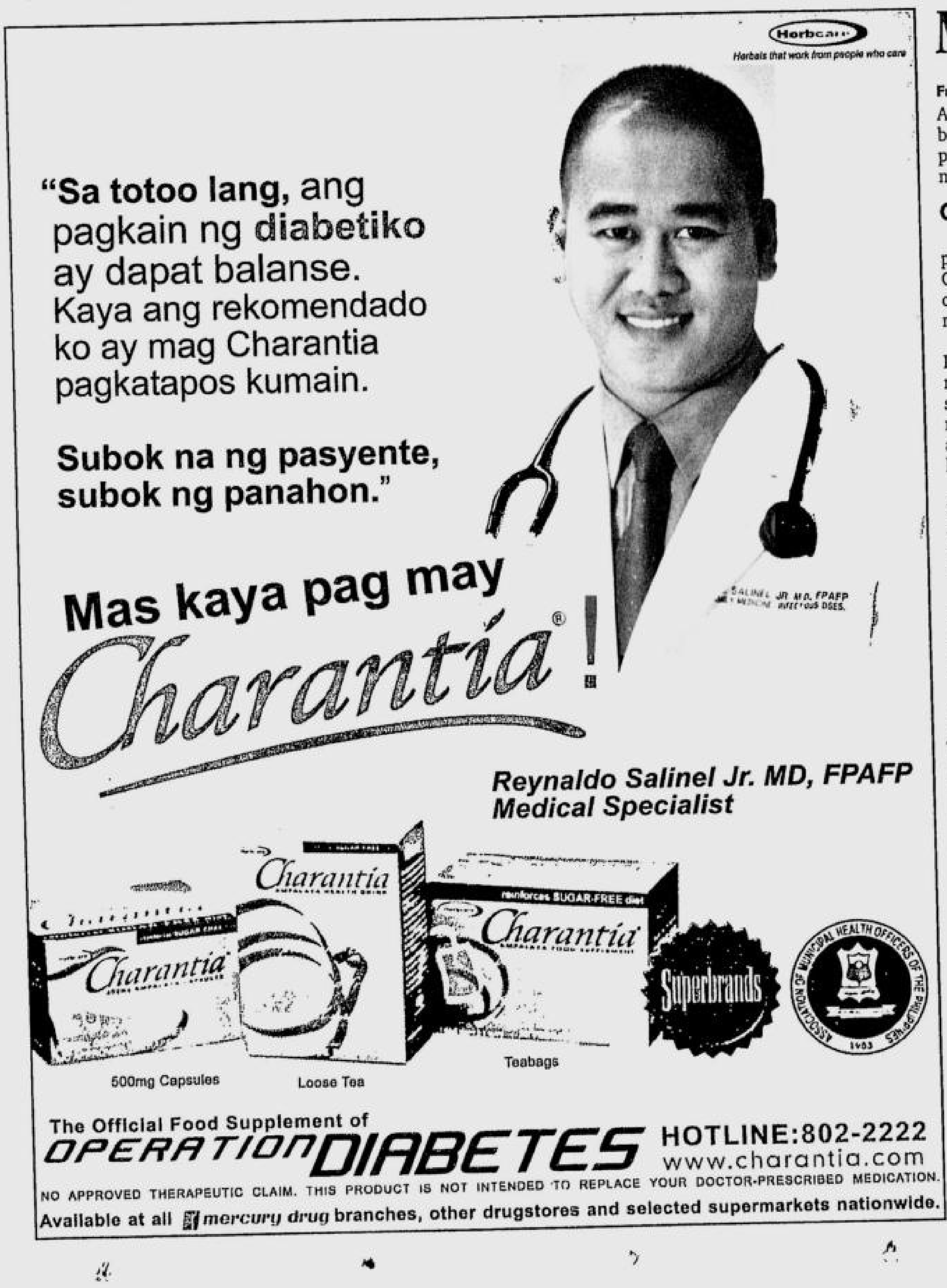
House awaits Mayuga

Also yesterday, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said Mayuga should explain his report to Congress when it resumes sessions after the Lenten holidays.

"We waited for such a long time for the Mayuga report only to find out that it would only absolve the generals involved in the so-called Hello Garci tapes," Escudero said.

"If that were really the result early on, why didn't they release it as early as November or December? Or did they wait to give the report a smooth landing?" he added.

The House opposition questioned Garcillano last year but got nowhere. Because of a technicality, it also failed in its attempt to mount impeachment proceedings against Ms Arroyo last year over election fraud charges.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Batasan 5 seeks TRO from SC to stop DOJ

By Armand N. Nocum

THE FIVE PARTY-LIST CONGRESSMEN who are accused of rebellion have asked the Supreme Court to issue a temporary restraining order (TRO) barring the Department of Justice (DOJ) from proceeding with its preliminary investigation.

Citing the DOJ's "lack of impartiality," the Batasan Five, through lead counsel Romeo Capulong, asked the court to disregard the March 22 order of the DOJ which denied the party-list congressmen's motion to bar Justice officials from conducting a preliminary investigation.

The Batasan Five namely, Reps. Satur Ocampo (Bayan Muna), Rafael Mariano (Anak Pawis), Teodoro Casiño (Bayan Muna), Liza Maza (Gabriella) and Joel Virador (Bayan Muna), was joined by Rep. Crispin Beltran (Anakpawis), who is detained for rebellion charges.

They also asked the court to nullify the April 4 order of the DOJ panel headed by Senior State Prosecutor Emmanuel Velasco, which denied the party-list congressmen's motion to dismiss rebellion charges

The congressmen described the evidence presented by the complainant Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation Division Group as "hearsay, spurious, unauthenticated and inadmissible" and asked that they be given five days to file their counter-affidavits.

They added that PNP-CIDG evidence against them were made up of recycled printed propaganda materials, news releases, documents of legal mass organizations and copies of downloaded articles retrieved from the anti-insurgency section of the military.

160 counterterrorism experts from 46 nations to meet in Cebu

By Jim Gomez
Associated Press Writer

MORE THAN 160 COUNTERTERRORISM officials and experts from 46 countries will gather this week to discuss how to combat militant Islamic radicals in ways that would be acceptable to more countries but still enhance the hardline US approach, an organizer said yesterday.

The April 20-22 conference at the Mactan Shangri-La in Cebu will also tackle dilemmas in the US-led campaign and the root problems that foster extremism, according to chief organizer Benjamin Defensor, a former military chief of staff.

Dilemmas

Defensor, in a phone interview, declined to name any dilemmas facing the war on terror or talk about the root causes, but noted that some countries lack "an antiterrorist culture."

The Philippines has allowed American troops to train and arm Filipino soldiers fighting al-Qaida-linked militants, something unthinkable in Muslim-majority neighbors Indonesia and Malaysia.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, a staunch backer of the US-led campaign, announced during last year's 21-nation APEC summit that her government would organize such a conference.

Barbarism

Differing outlooks on the US-led campaign are pronounced in Southeast Asia, considered a hotspot for Islamic militants.

"Terrorism is a return to barbarism but countries differ in the way they want to deal with this scourge," Defensor said. "We're looking for an approach that's acceptable to all—a middle ground."

When Australian Prime Minister John Howard suggested his country has the right to launch pre-emptive strikes on terror targets in Asia, a number of Asian countries strongly protested.

While countries have generally agreed to cooperate in fighting terrorists by sharing intelligence and staging joint counterterrorism military exercises, Defensor said it would help if as many governments as possible could forge common steps against terrorism.

'Anti-terrorist culture'

It would also help for governments to foster "an anti-terrorist culture," which would make it second nature to people and law enforcers to remain vigilant against possible terrorist strikes during long lulls between spectacular attacks, he said.

"Everybody gets interested in terrorism only when there is a devastating explosion. There is a lack of an antiterrorist culture," he said, adding "Terrorist threats remain and all nations remain vulnerable."

Terrorist target

The Philippines has both been a terrorist target and breeding ground.

Western security officials have long voiced concern over reports of terrorist training by al-Qaida's Southeast Asian ally, Jemaah Islamiyah, in the southern Philippines, where Muslim Filipino guerrillas have been waging a decades-long separatist war. They've said that the training camps could produce bombers that could strike anywhere. *AP*

PAL passengers told to check in 3 hours earlier

PHILIPPINE AIRLINES HAS ADVISED DOMESTIC and international passengers departing from Manila to check in at least three hours ahead of published departure time to avoid long queues during the peak summer travel period.

For passengers' benefit, PAL's check-in counters at Naia Centennial Terminal 2 will open as early as 1 a.m. for domestic flights and 3 a.m. for international services daily until May 31, 2006.

Passengers are normally required to check-in at least two hours ahead of their flight, but the extraordinary volume of passengers this summer season, coupled with the strict security checks, has resulted in kilometric lines at the airport.

A. F. Baterina, model mother, dies at 103

APOLINARIA FIGUERAS BATERINA OF SANTO Domingo, Ilocos Sur—teacher, Women's Auxiliary Service veteran of World War II, public servant, Mother of the Year awardee and widow of Salvador Mendoza Baterina—died on April 13 at the age of 103.

She is survived by her children Salacnib, representative of the first district of Ilocos Sur; Margot J., former desk editor of the INQUIRER; Benjamin and Vida; sister Amparo F. Lim, and children-in-law, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nephews, nieces, cousins and other relatives. She was preceded in death by her daughters Virginia and Norma, son Salvador Jr. and brother Panfilo E. Figueras.

Her remains lie at Kabatiran, Sto. Domingo, Ilocos Sur. Interment will take place on April 22 at 9 a.m. at the family plot in Sto. Domingo.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, April 18, 2006
Octave of Easter, Tuesday

1st Reading: Acts 2:36-41
Gospel: John 20:11-18

Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she bent down to look inside; she saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head, and the other at the feet. They said, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She answered, "Because they have taken my Lord and I don't know where they have put him."

As she said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not recognize him. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?" She thought it was the gardener and answered him, "Lord, if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and remove him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him, "Rabboni"—which means, Master. Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me; you see I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them: I am ascending to my Father, who is your Father, to my God, who is your God."

So Mary of Magdala went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord, and this is what he said to me."

Commentary

When we hear the story of Jesus' death and resurrection it must deeply shake us and bring us to repentance, forgiveness, and the life of the Spirit. We read the accounts of the disciples (Mary) seeing the Risen Lord, and how long it takes to actually see, come to believe, and change all of what we thought we knew of Jesus. Our personal relationships are tiny bits of who Jesus is and Jesus always seeks to bring us to His God and His Father, to our God and our Father, and not cling to the smallness of our grasping at God.

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Militants urge GMA to lift 'death sentence' on activists

BELTRAN: What about me?

By Luige A. del Puerto, Norman Bordadora and Michael Lim Ubac

WITHOUT AN UNEQUIVOCAL condemnation of political killings, the Arroyo administration's prolife stance falls short of the ideal, militant groups said yesterday.

While President Macapagal-Arroyo's act of commuting all death sentences had a seemingly humanitarian face, her administration was on a "murderous rampage" against militant groups, said the left-leaning group Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas.

The KMP cited the wave of killings in the Visayas and Luzon of politicial activists, many of whom were leaders of leftist organizations.

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) challenged Ms Arroyo to also "lift the virtual death sentence on activists and progressives."

It is untenable, Bayan said, that Ms Arroyo "sees only the plight of convicts but not ... the scores of activists killed outside prisons."

Bayan believes that some sectors in the Armed Forces of the Philippines are behind the killing of their civilian organizers and progressive advocates in the countryside.

It also believes that the Arroyo administration knows of these rights violations since it has yet to condemn the assassinations of militants.

"We challenge her to stop the death squads roaming the countryside and victimizing political opponents of the regime," said Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr.

KMP information officer Carl Ala accused the President of trying to divide the opposition with her wholesale commutation of all death sentences as she was well aware that her opponents were divided on capital punishment.

In a text message, Ala said the real reason behind Ms Arroyo's decision to spare the lives of more than 1,200 death row convicts was to divert attention away from the clamor for her resignation.

"It is a divide-and-rule tactic meant to drive a wedge between the anti-Arroyo forces because they have divergent views on death penalty," Ala said.

Bayan Muna Rep. Teodoro Casiño said Ms Arroyo's action was a "positive move" and urged her to go the extra mile by ordering the Armed Forces to stop killing militants.

"Ms Arroyo's order to commute the death sentences, for whatever political motives, is in itself a good start. The next step for her is to move for the passage of the various bills abolishing the death penalty," said Casiño, who coauthored House Bill No. 3421 seeking to abolish the death penalty.

Party-list Rep. Crispin Beltran, who is detained at the Camp Crame hospital while awaiting trial for rebellion, said the President's unprecedented move was "a gesture of political expediency and hypocrisy since political repression continues unabated."

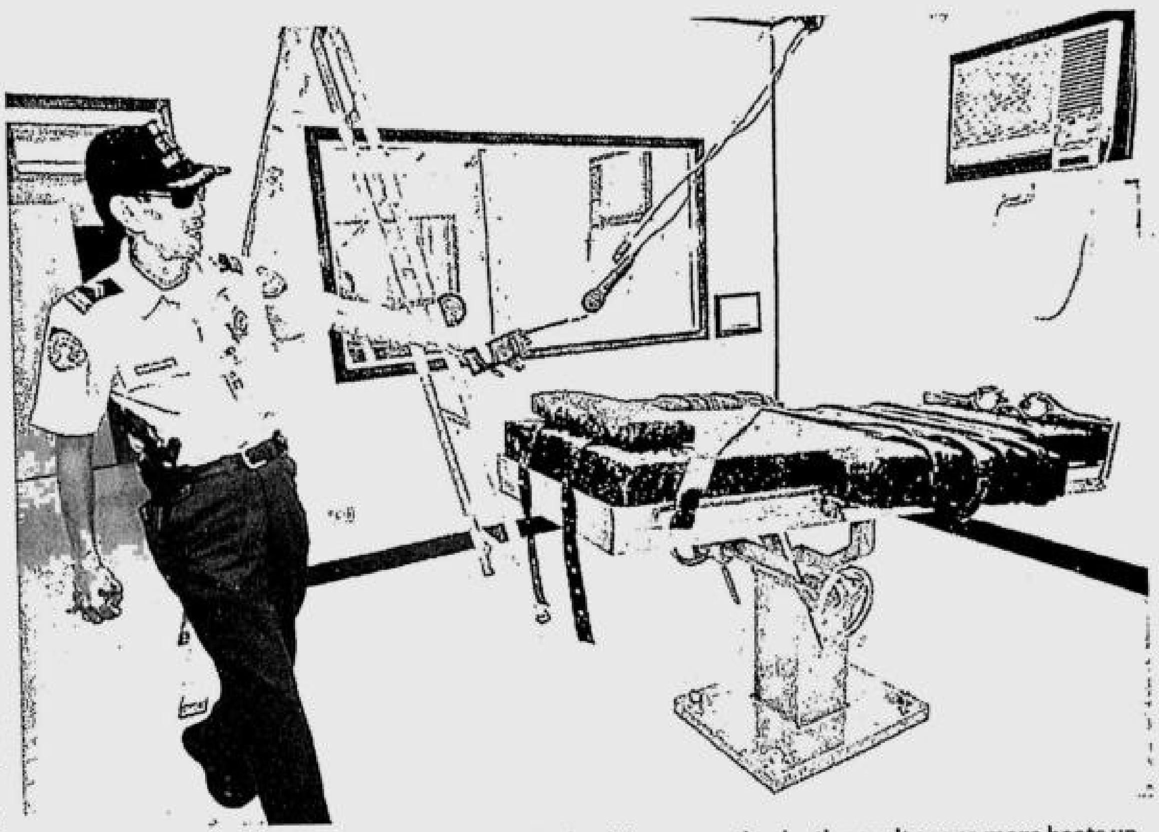
Beltran, who was arrested without a warrant the day after Ms Arroyo declared a state of national emergency on Feb. 24, said his continued detention was compelling proof of the administration's "two-faced stance."

He said victims of heinous crimes and their survivors were right in saying that the President's decision was "ill-advised and nonconsultative."

Makati Judge Jenny Lind Aldecoa-Delorino yesterday ordered that Beltran be allowed to transfer to a local hospital of his choice.

Crime victims threaten use of 'eye-for-an-eye' revenge

From page A1



OUTSIDE THE LETHAL INJECTION CHAMBER, the debate over the death penalty once more heats up between its proponents and prolifers. PDI PHOTO

President."

A weeping Teresita said she had fought hard and spent a large amount of money to ensure that justice was done for her 70-year-old sister.

"It is very painful. They kidnapped and brutally killed my sister, and now that justice has been attained, the President does this. It is not right," Teresita said. "What is wrong with the President?"

Roberta Cokin, also a businesswoman, was kidnapped in Bacolod City on July 15, 1995. Her abductors demanded P2 million in ransom but the money was not delivered because law enforcers bungled the payoff.

On Aug. 7 of that year, her body was found handcuffed in a shallow grave in Barangay Palaypay, Anilao, Iloilo. An autopsy showed she had been tortured.

Judge Roberto Chiongson of the Bacolod Regional Trial Court sentenced four persons—former rebel John Mamarion, Airman 2nd Class Charlito Domingo, Maj. Rolando Maclang and his alleged mistress, Juliet Harisco—to death for the kidnap-slay.

The decision was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2003.

Iloilo businessman Ronaldo Carrera Porquez, 50, was tagged as the mastermind and was arrested on March 30, 1999. He, too, was meted out the death penalty on July 8, 2002.

Teresita Cokin said she and her family supported Ms Arroyo during the 2004 election because they thought "she would be a good President."

"Now I regret having voted for her, but it is too late for that," Teresita said.

She also expressed fear that Ms Arroyo would again reduce the sentence on her sister's killers, and they would eventually get out of jail.

'Will it bring her back?'

In General Santos City, the mother of a bomb blast victim said Ms Arroyo's move was a setback for those seeking justice.

"Would it bring back the life of my daughter?" said Merly Galo, whose 12-year-old child Precious was among those killed when a bomb went off at the public market on Dec. 12, 2004.

One of the suspected bombers has been charged.

Even Protestant leaders found the President's decision objectionable.

Mat Mendoza, a pastor of the City Alliance Church, said the commutation virtually denied the crime victims the justice due them.

"If you commit a crime, especially a heinous crime, you have to pay for it. That's the law and we have to respect it," Mendoza said.

Josel Aguilar, a preacher at the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, said the law should be implemented to the letter.

"To my mind, the President made such a decision to please the priests," Aguilar said.

In line with Church stand

Indeed, the priests are pleased.

According to Msgr. Achilles Dakay, the Cebu Archdiocese media liaison officer, Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal was happy because Ms Arroyo's decision jibed with the stand of the Catholic Church against the death penalty.

But he quoted Vidal as saying that the Church would observe the President's "next steps."

Asked what Vidal meant, Dakay said the prelate wanted to see if the President would abide by the declaration of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines that she should now reveal the truth about the allegations of election fraud hounding her administration.

"If she wants to be consistent, *di iya sab tagaan ang gipangayo sa simbahan* [she will give what the Church asks]: Let the truth be told," Dakay said.

Like Vidal, Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarra was happy with Ms Arroyo's move because it was in line with the Church's prolife stance.

He said he would like to congratulate the President and thank her for the decision.

"The Church can never allow human intervention to take away life. That is a right that only belongs to God," Navarra said.

Abolition by law

But the 122-member CBCP wants more than just a commutation of all death sentences.

In a statement prepared by its president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, the CBCP said it wanted Congress to abolish the death penalty altogether. *(See story on Page A1.)*

"It is our prayer that it will not only be a presidential humanitarian act, but [that] Congress itself would abolish capital punishment by legislative act," it said in the statement.

Unfazed by the angry reactions of crime victims and other proponents of the death penalty, the bishops reminded their flock that "the rehabilitation and reformation of pardoned criminals must also be assured for the continuing peace and harmony in society."

They insisted that less corruption, immorality and poverty would mean "less criminality."

"The control of criminality, as well as the reform of society, is a common responsibility of the government, Church and civil society," the CBCP said in the statement.

Reiterating the position documented in the CBCP's "Compendium of the Social Doctrines of the Church," the bishops expressed optimism over the "growing public opposition to the death penalty, even when such a penalty is seen as a kind of legislative defense on the part of society."

According to the compendium, the Church believes that "modern society in fact has the means of effectively suppressing crime by rendering criminals harmless without definitively denying them the chance to reform."

Death convicts' worry

But news of the commutation has cast a certain gloom over the NBP's Building 1, where the more than 1,000 death convicts are held.

Monsignor Robert Olaguer, the prison chaplain, said that in a talk with the convicts on Sunday, most of them were worried that commutation would only lessen their chances at acquittal.

"They said the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeals may no longer review their cases once their sentences are commuted," Olaguer told the INQUIRER.

Only 101 (10 of them women) of the death convicts have had their sentences affirmed by the High Court, he said, adding:

"The others are distressed, too, because they don't know whether they are covered by the announcement. They are thankful to the President, but they are really worried that the courts will no longer prioritize their cases."

Olaguer also said the inmates had been receiving death threats and were anxious about their looming transfer to ordinary cells.

But NBP Director Vicente Vinarao said the security measures in the compound were sufficient to render "impossible" the supposed planned "liquidation" of the inmates. *With reports from Christian V. Esguerra in Manila; Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau; Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Manila judge sentences 4 kidnappers to death

From page A1

In her decision yesterday, Judge Myra Garcia-Fernandez of Regional Trial Court Branch 18 also ordered accused Ramon Aranda, Pelagio Tamayo Jr., Eduardo Saromines and Tony Bihag to pay Jocelyn Sy P400,000 in moral and exemplary damages.

In addition, the accused were ordered to pay Sy P79,000 representing the unrecovered ransom money, and for police authorities to return P73,000 they had recovered from the kidnappers.

Four other accused were acquitted for lack of sufficient evidence to prove their guilt. They were Christopher Albis, Ronnie Magtibay, Benhur Anastacio and Novelo Anastacio.

A ninth accused, Felipe Anastacio, died while the case was being heard.

Sy was abducted at around 7:30 p.m. on Aug. 5, 1997, in Quiapo. Sy told the court that she, her mother and driver had just boarded their Tamaraw FX after coming from their stall at the Quinta Market when the accused forcibly entered their vehicle.

She said the men took her bag containing cash and jewelry amounting to P50,000. She was then blindfolded, transferred to another car and taken to a house in Pasay City.

Ransom raised, negotiated

The kidnappers initially demanded ransom of P5 million. This was raised to P30 million after the accused learned from the victim's mother, who was interviewed on a news program, that the family owned a factory and several vehicles.

But after negotiations, a ransom of P250,000 was agreed on.

Sy was detained for four nights and three days before she was released somewhere in Kamias, Quezon City, after the payoff.

The accused were later arrested by authorities. Seized from them were part of the ransom, several firearms, boxes of .45-cal. bullets, a bankbook containing a P5-million deposit, blank checks, a passport and a piece of paper containing a list of names.

The court dismissed the denials of the men, saying these could not prevail over Sy's testimony.

It found "credible and worthy of belief" the direct and straightforward testimony of the victim and her husband, who had handed the ransom to one of the accused, the judge said in her decision.

Escudero hits 'secret' Cha-cha verification

By Philip C. Tubeza and Tarra V. Quismundo

HOUSE MINORITY LEADER FRANCIS ESCUDERO yesterday scored the Commission on Elections' "secret" verification drive of the signatures gathered for the people's initiative to revise the 1987 Constitution.

Escudero said that while the media reported that Comelec had validated signatures collected in some regions of the country, election officers have yet to produce official reports or documents about the verification process.

Sigaw ng Bayan, meanwhile, forwarded for verification more than 46,000 signatures in favor of Charter change before the Comelec office in Makati City, a known bailiwick of the political opposition.

Sigaw ng Bayan is a confederation of organizations campaigning for popular voice to amend the Constitution.

The submission came just as the Makati City Council passed City Resolution 2006-071 "strongly opposing any move to amend the Constitution through an anomalous people's initiative."

Forwarded to Comelec-Makati's District 1 office was a box containing 29,542 signatures collected from the area's 207,304 registered voters. The signatures represented a 14.25-percent approval of the Charter change proposal, including those gathered from the villages.

Out of 172,765 registered voters in District 2, the group encouraged 9.88 percent or 17,061 residents to sign in favor of Charter change.

"We were not given any guidelines so we will just check with our records if the signatures match... if they are registered voters and if the signatures are seemingly similar," said District 1 Election Officer Ma. Lourdes Ugalino.

Barangays that gave the organization the most number of signatures were Barangay Guadalupe Nuevo in District 2, where 5,409 votes were collected, and Barangay Pio del Pilar in District 1, where 5,000 residents signed for Charter change.

Interestingly, the group only collected 178 signatures out of registered voters in Makati's villages, which included the city's plush subdivisions like Forbes Park, Dasmariñas, San Antonio, San Lorenzo and Bel-Air.

DOH on lookout for infection linked to contact lens solution

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SAID YESTERDAY it was on the lookout for a potentially blinding eye infection in the wake of a rash of such infections in the United States in which some of the victims had been reported to have used a well-known brand of contact lens solution.

The DOH was taking this course in the absence of any advisory either from the Bureau of Food and Drugs or the company Bausch & Lomb regarding the use of the ReNu solution.

Although no link had been established between the infection and the solution, the company has warned the American public against using the product and asked retailers to pull out supplies from their shelves.

"We have no advisory yet," Dr. Eric Tayag, the DOH's top epidemiologist, told the INQUIRER yesterday. "In the meantime, we're looking for cases involving *fusarium keratitis*," a fungal infection in the cornea that can lead to blindness, he added.

Tayag asked the public to observe proper hygiene in handling contact lenses. One effective practice is to wash one's hands with soap and water before applying or removing contact lenses, he said.

He said the Philippines was not exactly free from the rare fungal eye infection, citing cases in the past.

But whether the disease was connected with ReNu is another story. And that's what experts in the US were still trying to find out, according to Tayag.

"They still don't know if the problem is really with the contact lens solution," he said.

CNN reported in its website that public health officials in 17 states in the US were looking into 109 cases of *fusarium keratitis*, at least eight of whom required corneal transplants.

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INQUIRER TV GUIDE

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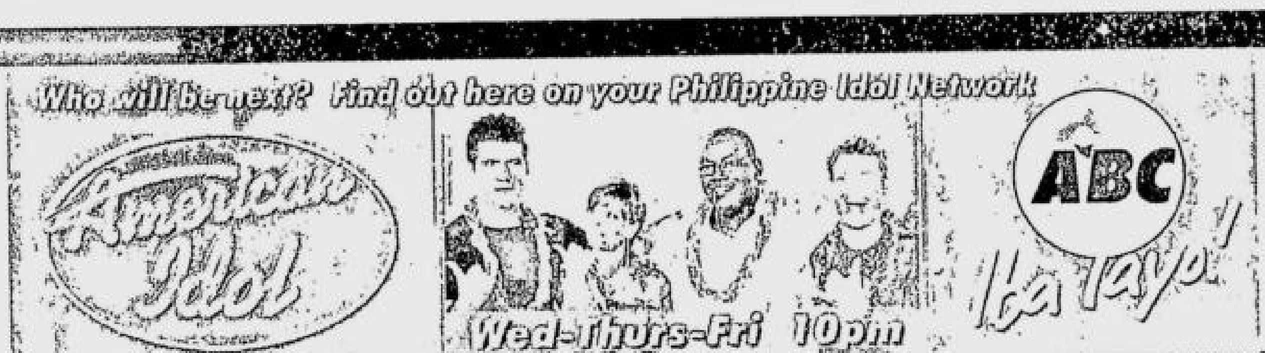

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ABC 5	WNCAA (Rerun)	National Geographic	Premier Snooker League	Sentro	Mumbai Thrillers	TNA Impact	Guinness Book Of Record	Big News	Next Action Star	ALI
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema	Pasion de Amor	Little Amy	Mr. Bean	Naruto	Outstanding Twins	TV Patrol World	Gulong Ng Palad	Sa Piling Mo	Panday	Princess Lulu	Bora	Insider
AXN	Lost (Season II)	House	Sports Disaster VI	Sakura Wars	Sakura Wars	PSI Factor (Season III)	The Amazing Race (Season IX)	Alias (Season IV)	CSI: NY (Season 2)	Rescue Me
Cartoon Network	Police Academy	Richie Rich	Hi Hi Puffy AmiYumi	Tom & Jerry Show	Baby Looney Tunes	Codename: Kids Next Door	Foster's Home For Imaginary Friends	The Grim Adventures Of Billy & Mandy	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	Power Rangers Wild Force	PokeMon	Yu-Gi-Oh Double Duel	Powerpuff Girls	Mucha Lucha!	Duck Dodgers	Justice League	Samurai Jack
Cinema One	Solman Brothers	Aishete Imasu	Eto Na Naman Ako	Mr. Suave	Virgin Island
Cinemax	When The Dark Man Calls	Original (6:15 PM)	Crash Landing	Paris Trout	Sniper 3 (11:10PM)
CNN	Business International	World News	World Sport	Larry King Live	Business International	World Sport	World News Asia	World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Your World Today
Crime/Suspense	Dominick Dunne's Power, Privilege & Justice	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	Profiler	Forensic Files	Body Of Evidence	Law & Order	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	Surface	Prison Break	Law & Order: Criminal Intent
Discovery Channel	I Shouldn't Be Alive	Rides	James Cameron's Expedition: Bismarck	Wild Discovery	Hour Asia	Great Quakes	Blueprint For Disaster	True Crime Scene
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Lilo & Stitch	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven That's So Trendy Minis	Wonderful World Of Disney	Suite Life Of Zack And Cody	Phil Of The Future	Mickey Mouse and Friends	Chip N Dale's Rescue Rangers	Wonderful World Of Disney
ESPN	Pro Billiards '05 PCA Open 9-Ball C'ships Finals	Pool World Pool Masters 2001	Asian X Games '05 Presented by Kia	Asian X Games '05 Presented by Kia	Watersports Programming Hot Water	Atlantic Coast Conf. Basketball Duke Vs Georgia Tech	Sportscenter Asia	Sportscenter Asia	Pro Billiards '05 Men's World Summit of Pool	Pro Billiards '05 Women's Trick Shot Magic Billiards	Sportscenter Asia
ETC	Insider Weekend	Project Runway	Change of Heart	Elimidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show	One Tree Hill 3	The O.C. 2	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno
EWTN	Super Saints	Angelus (3:15 PM)	ABCatholic	Angel Force	Rosary With Mother Angelica	EWTN Gallery	Mirror Of The Soul	Lord, Have Mercy	Behold the Man Spirituality for Men	The Journey Home Encore	Daily Mass Live	Angelus (9:15 PM)	The Good Code The Natural Law	Cenacle Of Divine Mercy	Octavia Dies	Web Of Faith
Fox News	Hannity & Colmes	On The Record With Greta Van Susteren	The O'Reilly Factor	Your World With Neil Cavuto	Fox & Friends	Fox News Live
GMA 7	Kung Mamahalin Mo Lang Ako	Now and Forever	First Love Of A Royal Prince	Dragonball Z	Great Teacher Onizuka	Le Robe de Mariage	24 Oras	Extra Challenge	Majika	Encantadia	My Name Is Kim Sam Soon	Jewel In The Palace	Bahay Mo Ba 'To?	Sakal
Hallmark Channel	McLeod's Daughters IV	Last Call (5:05 PM)	Bewitched	The Nanny	Family Law III	Missing II	Judging Amy	H2O	Judging Amy (11:45PM)
HBO	The Fighting Temptations	No Big Deal	The Myth Of Fingerprints	Deadwood 17: Complications	Deadwood 18: Something Very Expensive	McHale's Navy (9:50 PM)	The Sister-In-Law (11:45PM)
Hero TV	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Sorcerer Hunter	Soul Hunters	Lost Universe	Beyblade G-Revolution	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Naruto	Mirmo de Pon	Inuyasha	Yu-Gi-Oh Duel Monsters	Yakitate! Japan	Mr Ajikko	D.I.C.E.	Samurai Deeper Kyo	Sorcerer Hunter
IBC 13	EZ Shop	Serbis On The Go	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot	Home Shopping Network	ME TV	PBA Best Of The Philippines	Global Family Songs	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network
JackTV	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	The Late Show David Letterman	Raw	The Batman	Just For Laughs (Gags)	Mad TV	Arrested Development	The Late Show David Letterman	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Comedy Central Presents	South Park	The Man Show
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MTV Philippines	Pimp My Ride	Handpicked [illegible]	Pop Inc	2006 MAA Nominees Specials	MTV Hits	Get Spotted	Bling	MTV Hits	TRL	Pimp My Ride	Sessions [illegible]	Jams
MYX	Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX Versions	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten	Top Of The Pops	Radio MYX	MYX News	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXILOG
National Geographic	Africa From The Ground Up	Air Crash Investigation	Seconds From Disaster	Who's Afraid Of Designer Babies?	Top 5	Wow!	About Asia	Terrorism Week: Hijacked	Air Crash Investigation: Kid In The Cockpit, Crash Fury, [illegible], Black Helicopter Down	Seconds From Disaster
NBN	Teledyaryo Alas-Tres	Teledyaryo Sports Alap	[illegible]	Teledyaryo W/ Rey Langit & Angelique Lazo	Tinig ng Bayan (Live)	Teledyaryo Final Edition	Bantay OCW With Susan K
Nickelodeon	My Life As A Teenage Robot	All Grown Up	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	All That	All Grown Up	As Told By Ginger	Four Eyes	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	My Dad The Rock Star
PBO	Dama	Tol Ako Naman	Shame, One Night Only	Magdusa Ka	Sabong
Qtv	Ikaw Lang Ang Mamahalin	Zenki	Kaleido Star	MMS (My Music Station)	Moms	Love At Aegean Sea	Irene	Noel	Laugh To Laugh Ang Kulit	My Guardian Alien	News On Q	Sandy's [illegible]	Irene	Over The Green Fields
RPN 9	TV Shopping	[illegible]	Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	[illegible]	Australia's Next Top Model	Paradise Hotel	Newswatch Now	Tuesday Night Trivia
SBN 21	New Life TV Shopping	Winner TV Shopping	Quantum Global	Oras Ng Himala	[illegible]	SBN Music Video
Solar Sports	WTA NASDAQ-[illegible]	GWS 14-2006	NBA Game Jazz @ Spurs	Sportsdesk	Asian Badminton C'ships Finals
Sports Plus	Pro Bull Celebrity Poker Challenge	World Game	[illegible]	Rookie Manual	Ultimate Fighting Championship	Gillette World Cup Preview II	World Poker Tour 2
Star Movies	China Moon	Phantom Below (4:10 PM)	[illegible] (5:45 PM)	The Engagement Ring (7:50PM)	Deep Rescue	10 Things I Hate About You
Star World	Frasier	The Bold & The Beautiful	General Hospital	Ed	The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	Charmed	The O.C.	North Shore	Seinfeld	Charmed
Studio 23	Bewitched	Naruto	Batman Beyond	Monkey Typhoon	Sparks	TBA	Wazzup Wazzup	Andromeda	Smallville (8:20 PM)	Glamour Girls (9:10 PM)	News Central	Oprah	Reality World

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Fil-Ams re-embrace native land

From page A1

Leo Nadal and his wife, among the oath-takers that day who availed themselves of dual citizenship under Republic Act No. 9225 or the Citizenship Retention and Reacquisition Law of 2003.

"The story of Mr. and Mrs. Nadal is very inspiring," Sanchez said. "He is an engineer while his wife is a nurse, and they plan to retire in the Philippines and start a new life."

In her report to the Department of Foreign Affairs, the diplomat did not indicate how many Filipino-Americans had reacquired Filipino citizenship through the mission since the law was passed. But she said the consulate was holding the ceremony every Friday.

"In a sense, there is now this reverse migration going on wherein our best and brightest people are coming back home to help in the development of our motherland," Mendoza said.

There are "many advantages and no discernable disadvantages" in becoming a dual citizen, she said.

National elections

An overseas Filipino could, for example, register and vote in national elections in the Philippines like those scheduled for 2007. He or she could also travel with a Philippine passport.

It would also be much easier for a dual citizen to invest in real estate in the Philippines than one who was once a Filipino but is now solely an American citizen, Mendoza said.

One of the frequently asked questions by Filipino-Americans contemplating dual citizenship is whether they will have to pay income tax to the Philippine government. "The answer to that is no," Mendoza said.

The Philippines will tax dual citizens only on income derived from businesses conducted in the country. Earnings generated in the United States will not be taxed, she said.

From the nation's No. 1 Newspaper: INQUIRER
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JOB Market

APO ISLAND, NEGROS ORIENTAL, was another attraction at the Marine Diving Fair exhibition. Others were the Tubbattaha Reef in the Sulu Sea; Malapascua, Cebu, Puerto Galera in Oriental Mindoro, and the islands of Palawan. YVETTE LEE

Diving sites place RP in world's top 3

From page A1

Also featured were Balicasag Island in Bohol, Anilao in Batangas, the popular Apo Island in Negros Oriental, and the islands of Palawan.

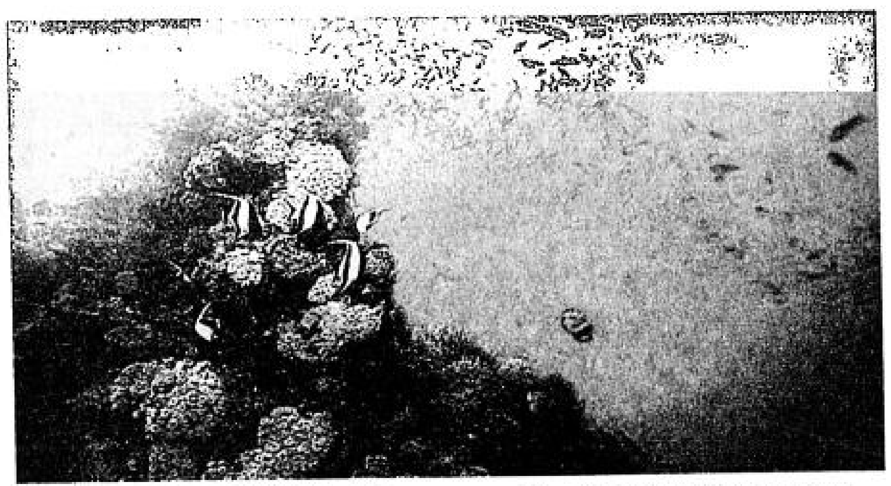
The awards given at the fair were the result of a survey conducted by the MDF organizers, the PTA said in a statement.

Asia's biggest diving fair

The MDF is considered Asia's largest scuba diving and beach resort exhibition. It attracts close to 50,000 visitors.

The annual event provides a unique opportunity for exhibitors to target consumers and those from the travel and tourism industry. This year, 144 exhibitors representing 24 countries participated in the fair.

"The tourism market of the world's diving industry is very big," Barbers said. "Having been named among the world's best dive sites could jump-start our moves to further develop dive resorts around the country."



THE BEATRICE ROCK in Anilao, Batangas, one of the diving sites exhibited at the Marine Diving Fair, boosted the Philippines' chances of landing in the top 3, besting the world's other diving destinations like the Caribbean and the South Pacific. YVETTE LEE

Exploring even a third of the country's more than 7,000 islands "as potential dive sites would surely be a welcome development in our tourism industry," he said.

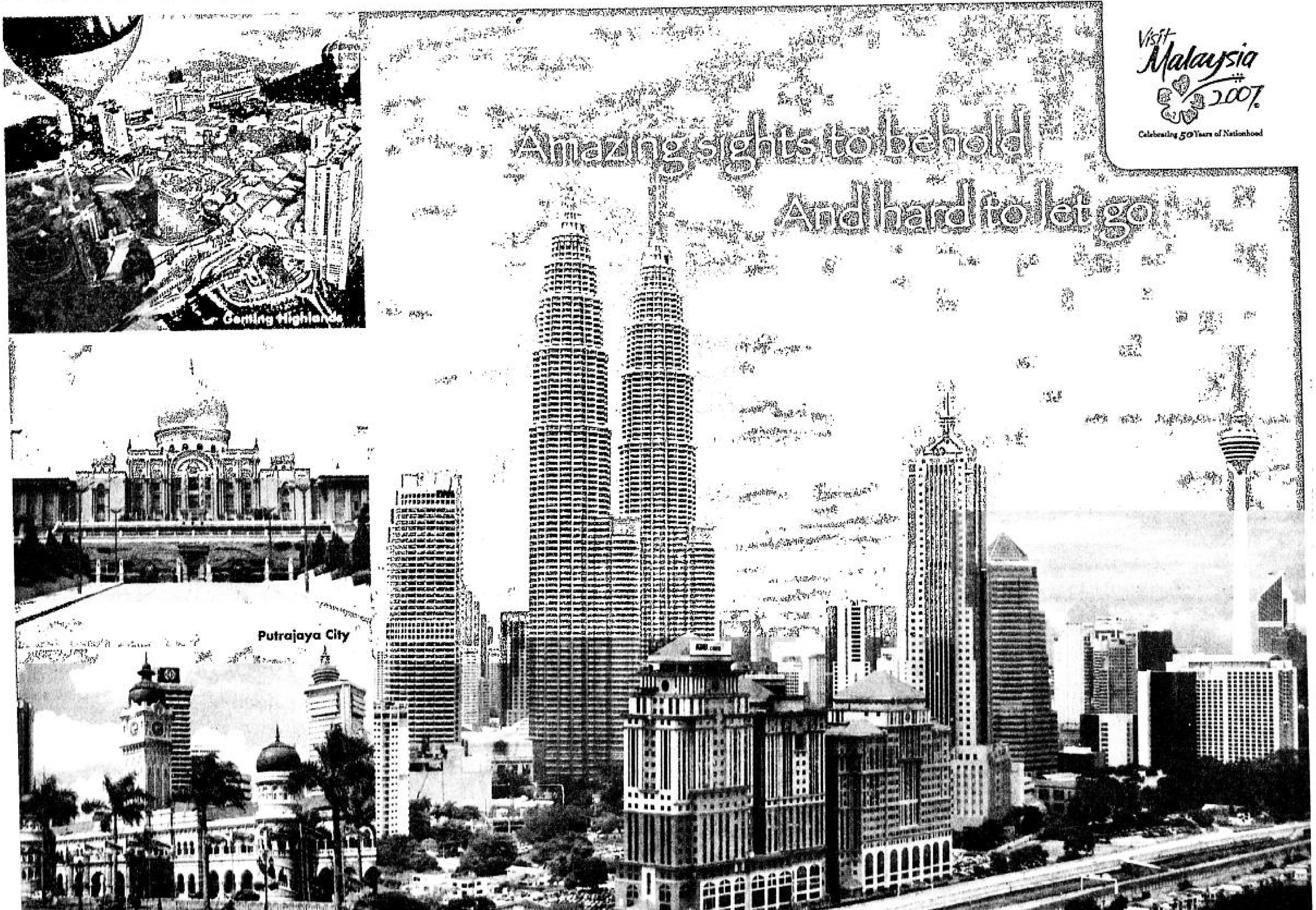
Environmental awareness

Barbers, a former chair of the Philippine Commission on Sports Scuba Diving, said he hoped the award would not only encourage further investments in dive sites but also create environmental awareness to protect marine life.

The Marine Art Center in Japan, which organized the MDF, places the number of Japanese divers at one million.

Barbers said the government's drive to bring in more foreign tourists would translate to more jobs and more investments in the tourism industry.

The participation of the Philippines in the MDF was part of the year-long series of events celebrating the 50th anniversary of Filipino-Japanese diplomatic relations. *Jerome Aning*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Solon says soldiers being recruited in new plot vs GMA

THE VICE CHAIR OF THE HOUSE COMMITtee on national defense and security claimed yesterday that the foes of President Macapagal-Arroyo were recruiting soldiers in a new plot to drive her out of power as the country observes Labor Day next month.

Rep. Benasing Macarambon of Lanao del Sur echoed a recent allegation attributed to an unidentified military officer that the "opposition was trying to look for a charismatic military officer who would withdraw support from the government."

He said AFP Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga and other senior officers were being enticed to join the plot by politicians who were "gambling with the fate of the country, just to supplant the President." *Michael Lim Ubac*

Palace keeps hands off Mancao arrest in US

By Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG CLEARLY IS NOT ABOUT to meddle in the US investigation into the White House spy scandal involving Filipinos, following the detention last week of former Philippine National Police Senior Supt. Cesar Mancao by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Presidential Chief of Staff Michael Defensor said in Baguio City yesterday that because Manila and Washington had an extradition treaty, the Philippine government must cooperate with the US government in the same way that the latter was expected to do likewise if the shoe were on the other foot.

"We have to respect the American justice system and whether [Mancao] was arrested or voluntarily surrendered, definitely *ginagawa siyang* witness (they are considering him as a witness) against Aquino," said Defensor, referring to Mancao's former colleague in the PNP, former Senior Supt. Michael Ray Aquino, who is under arrest in the US on immigration and spying charges.

In fact, the government won't protest if the US government subpoenaed Philippine officials who allegedly received classified information from Filipino-American FBI analyst Leandro Aragoncillo and Aquino that had been obtained from FBI files, Defensor said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said Mancao was arrested by FBI agents in Florida in connection with the spying scandal in the White House that saw the arrest last year of Aragoncillo and Aquino.

Both Mancao and Aquino were close aides of opposition Sen. Panfilo Lacson when the latter was PNP chief. They were tagged in the Salvador "Bubby" Dacer-Emmañuel Corbito double murder case in 2000 along with other members of the defunct Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force (Paoctf) which Lacson had headed.

Lacson the other day said Mancao surrendered and was not arrested after learning that FBI agents were looking for him to be "a material witness in the Aragoncillo case."

According to National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) Interpol Division chief Claro de Castro Jr., Mancao was arrested on the basis of a material witness warrant.

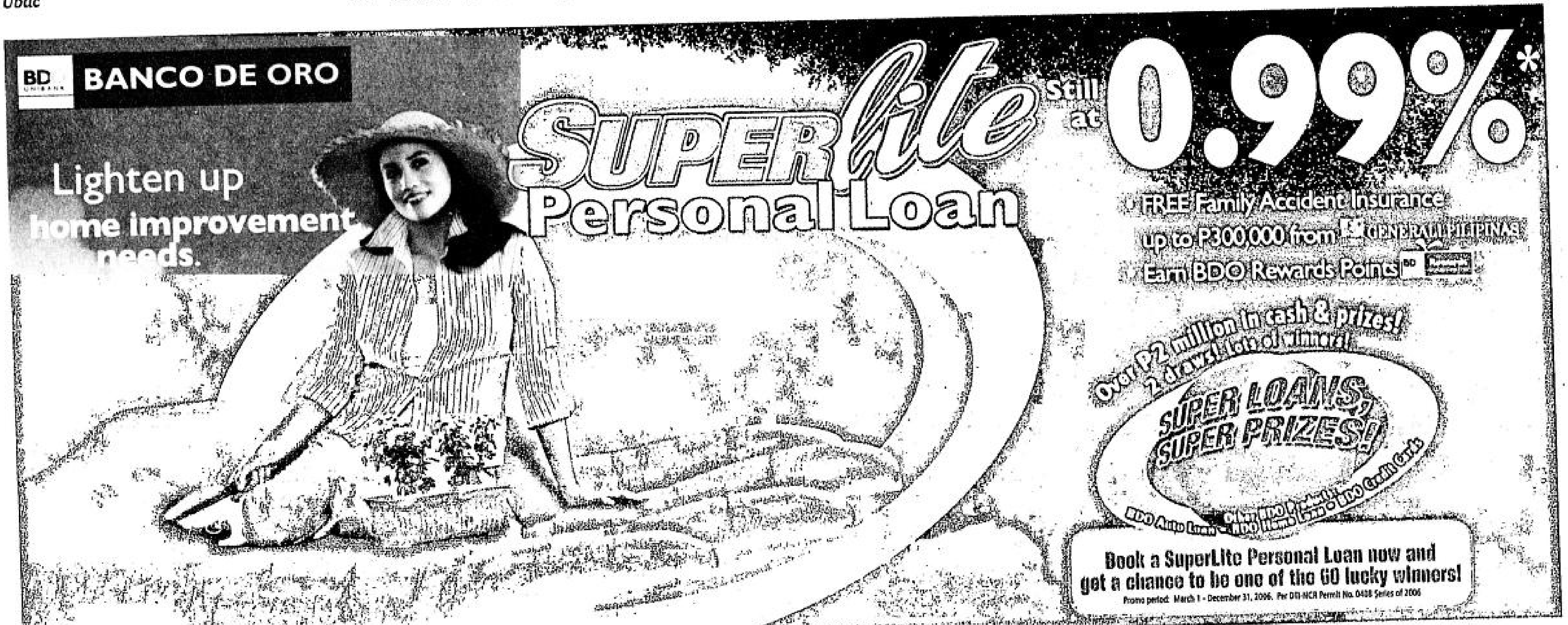
"(The US authorities) believe Mancao has information regarding the espionage case involving Aquino and Aragoncillo," De Castro told reporters yesterday.

De Castro said Mancao would be presented in a US court and asked if he would be willing to give information regarding the case.

"He would then be questioned by the US Attorney's office and eventually presented in court to testify," De Castro said.

"If the US Attorney is satisfied with his statement, Mancao may be released immediately," he said.

Charges were filed against Aragoncillo and Aquino last year for allegedly passing classified information about Filipino leaders obtained from classified FBI files to current and former Philippine officials. *With Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau, and Margaux C. Ortiz*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Distrusted

EDITORIAL

SHORTLY BEFORE THE HOLY WEEK VACATION, retired Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., presidential adviser on electoral reforms, called for a revamp of the Commission on Elections. He submitted to President Macapagal-Arroyo the names of six people "of integrity" as possible new members of the commission that has been tainted with allegations of fraud and connivance with politicians.

Malacañang said that the President would seriously consider Davide's recommendations, but until yesterday, there was no indication that she was moving to bring about a revamp of the Comelec. What she did, instead, was appoint Davide ambassador to the United Nations. Her latest action can only fuel speculation that she gave him the new appointment so that he would not follow up his recommendations.

Ms Arroyo may be prohibited by the Constitution from firing the Comelec commissioners who may be removed only through impeachment, but as President, she can wield very strong persuasive powers to urge the "old" members of the Comelec to resign. (There seems to be no problem with the two new Comelec members—Romeo Brawner and Rene Sarmiento—who had no participation in the cases that have given the Comelec a bad name.)

The proper way to bring about a revamp of the Comelec would be to have the "old" commissioners impeached. But it would be very difficult to initiate impeachment proceedings because the majority in the House, which supports Ms Arroyo, are expected to kill such a move, the way they killed the impeachment complaint against the President last year.

But there is another way to get the "old" commissioners out of the Comelec, and that is to file criminal charges against them. In January, then Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo was reportedly ready to sign the report that would have forced the Comelec officials to be tried by the Sandiganbayan, but First Gentleman Miguel Arroyo was said to have talked him out of it. According to former Senate President Jovito Salonga, this was the reason Marcelo chose to resign before his term was over.

The ball is now in the court of new Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez, but it appears that she is taking her own sweet time in acting on the case. Her inaction prompted the Supreme Court last Feb. 14 to order her to explain why she should not be cited for contempt for not complying with its order to determine the criminal liability of the Comelec officials involved in the voided contract between the Comelec and MegaPacific Corp.

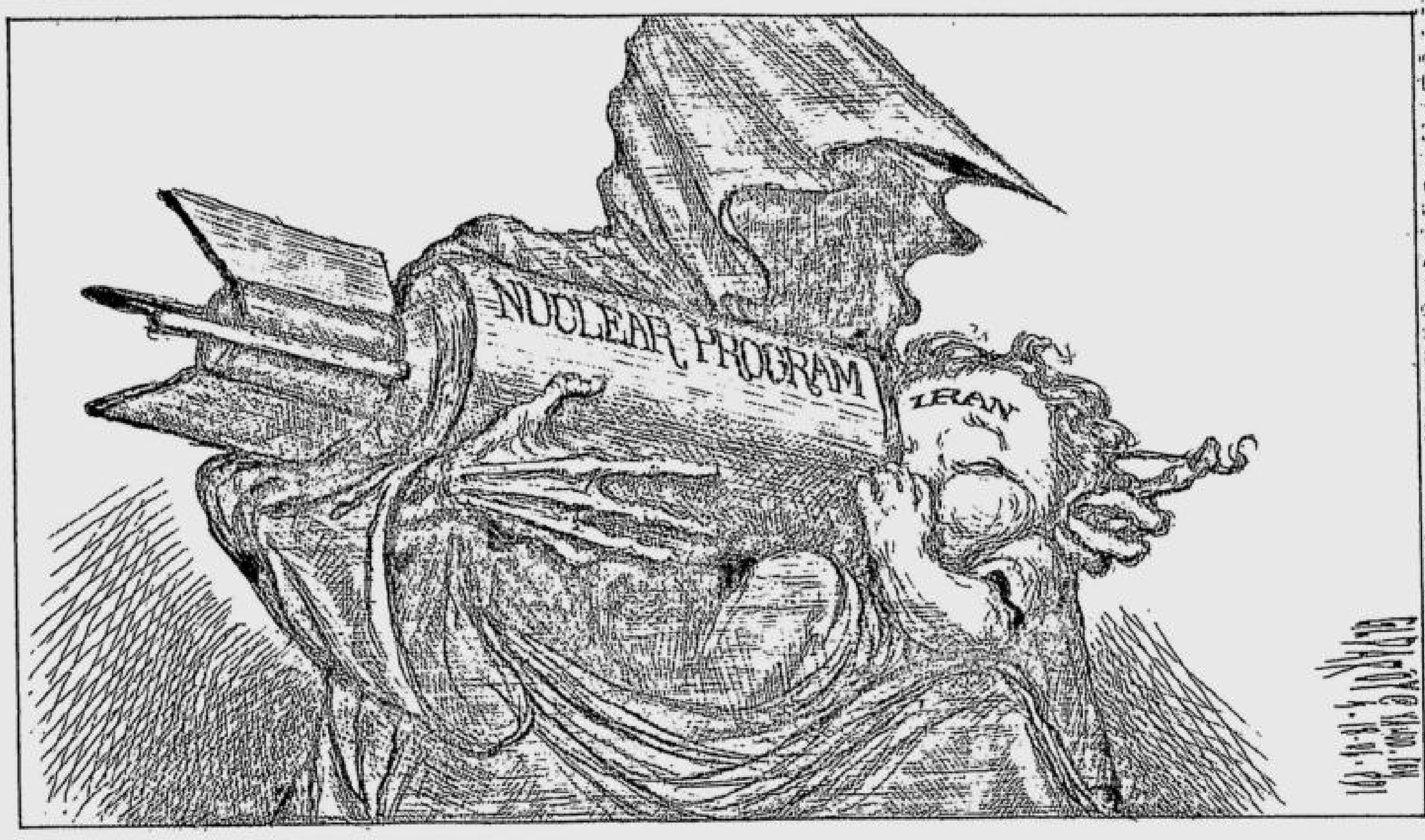
The Court, on Jan. 13, 2004, nullified the P1.3-billion contract for the supply of automated counting machines. In its decision, it said, "The illegal, imprudent and hasty actions of the commission have not only desecrated legal and jurisprudential norms, but have also cast serious doubts upon the poll body's ability and capacity to conduct automated elections."

There is almost universal distrust of the Comelec. Last July, at the height of the "Hello Garci" controversy, a Social Weather Stations survey gave the Comelec a negative 27 trust rating. Early this month, the latest Pulse Asia survey showed that 52 percent of the people favor the resignation of the Comelec commissioners as a result of the still unresolved controversies surrounding the conduct of the May 2004 elections.

It is not only the automation contract that has made the Comelec one of the most notorious and most distrusted government agency. The "Hello Garci" scandal allegedly involving the President and former Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano, the suspicious activities of former Commissioner Luz Tancangco and other Comelec officials and the "*dagdag-bawas*" irregularities that allegedly marred the election of some senators are among the things that have seriously tainted the reputation of the Comelec.

Despite all these, the "old" members of the Comelec have said they would not resign. They would, instead, cling to their posts like leeches. In another country, like Japan, for instance, these officials would not only have resigned but would have committed sepukku.

With the 2007 elections coming up soon, the revamp recommended by Davide has to be carried out soon. If the "old" commissioners do not resign, the ombudsman should charge them for their participation in the poll modernization scam. The commissioners would then be automatically suspended for 90 days. Then maybe, if they have any delicadeza left, they would resign.



Gluttons for punishment

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"DEMOCRACY SOMETIMES SEEMS THE ART of running a circus from the monkey cage," editor H.L. Mencken once wrote.

From his gilded detention cage, ex-President Joseph Estrada signaled, once again, that he's willing to run the circus that is today's Malacañang. How? Like the honky-tonk bar that his soused "midnight cabinet" caroused in from June 1998 to January 2001?

This time, he pledges to lead a squabbling, tainted opposition in a victorious snap election. In the process, he'd shuck off those plunder charge handcuffs.

Ask and you will receive Erap as leader, says spokesman Didagen Dilangalen. "People power would be the best way" to his re-enthronement. He's still the "legitimate head of state," Dilangalen adds without blinking. In a snap election, Erap would thrash Arroyo.

Perhaps so. But a snap election between Arroyo and Estrada offers a choice between Barabbas and Barabbas. It'd short-circuit the Constitution. Snap elections are held only when the presidency and vice presidency are vacant.

That's not the case here. Numero Uno and Numero Dos cling fiercely to position. President Macapagal-Arroyo used her eroding Visayas clout to neutralize antipathy in Manila and Luzon. Noli de Castro, meanwhile, tries to look presidential.

Estrada, meanwhile, welcomed April surveys that showed 6 out of 10 Filipinos wanted the President to quit. When 2004 surveys tracked the President rapidly closing on Fernando Poe, Estrada denounced them as rigged.

Like Richard Nixon, Erap pinned his hopes for executive pardon on a friendly chief executive. "That a man's reach should exceed his grasp, / Or what's a heaven for?"

The opposition, communists and party-list comrades failed to uncork people power. From Camp Capinpin to Tanay, Erap urged people to rise. "We're not getting anywhere with these rallies," the hard-nosed pragmatist San Juan Rep. Ronald Zamora told squabbling opposition colleagues.

Does Erap think people power will spring him from the slammer before the Sandiganbayan decides his case? That's delusion. The surveys found a majority thumbed down a rerun of people power, much less a military coup. "The worst deluded are the self-deceived," Christian Bovee writes.

For five years, Erap sulked in detention, just as Achilles did in his dusty tent in Troy. The country meanwhile moved on. "Time flies and does not return," says an old Latin maxim.

The question has changed to: How long can President Arroyo hold on? Until July when, by Speaker Jose de Venecia's reckoning, the ongoing farcical "people's initiative" embeds a new Charter, despite its patent constitutional flaws?

Those who'd revise the Constitution can't tell you what "people's initiative" will cobble. But all concur that the Transitory Provisions ensure that the President, along with elected officials, would coast, without elections, to 2010.

"Is there anything new under the sun?" Ecclesiastes wearily asks. Today's "people's initiative" recycles former President Fidel Ramos' "Pirma" campaign to allow reelection.

The Transitory Provisions shut out Estrada. His term petered out in 2004. He is an "ex." Period. Those presidential wristbands are irrelevant.

Like lost time, missed opportunity never returns. At his Luneta inaugural, Erap perorated, in cadenced prose ghost-written by Teodoro Locsin Jr., his flubbed chance: "This time, things will be different. What wealth will be generated will be equitably shared. What sacrifices are demanded will be evenly carried. This much I promise: for every sacrifice you carry, I will carry twice the weight to make freedom more meaningful."

"My promises are made to be fulfilled in a working day," he added. "They are hopes of ordinary Filipinos like myself... The common people have waited long enough for their day to come.

"That day is here. Now, power is with the people. One of their own has made it."

He never made it. Instead, he failed to deliver. "Between 1997 and 2000, overall poverty increased from 25.1 percent to 27.5 percent," the Philippine Human Development Report notes. "There were an estimated 3.3 million more poor Filipinos in 2000 than there were in 1997."

Worse, "5K government" dominated: *kamaganak, kaibigan, kaklase, kumpadre*—and *kabit*. Dante Ang, Jaime Dichavez, Yolanda Ricaforte, Cecilia de Castro were his regime's version of Ms Arroyo's Joc-Joc Bolante, Virgilio Garcillano et al. They skipped town without leaving forwarding addresses.

Barely a third into its six-year term, a drunken corrupt-to-the-core Estrada regime was booted out by People Power II. He became the first Philippine president to be impeached.

The "Wowowee" tragedy, however, showed that show biz remains the opiate for many Filipinos. This is a nation where half of those between 7 and 21 years don't read even comics. "Will stardust from a movie icon blind an impoverished half-educated electorate and enable (him) to crawl back to power?" the Cebu Daily News asked.

Erap II would inflict more of the same pummeling. It would prove our critics right: we Filipinos, are gluttons for punishment.

10 things to love about being in the Philippines

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE IDEA FOR THIS COLUMN CROPPED UP in my head late last week. I had pretty much forgotten how great Metro Manila felt without the crush of cars and jeepneys, beggars and businessmen, saints and sinners spilling out into its streets every day, until I drove around last Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Most Metro Manilans had left for their hometowns, if not for Boracay and Baguio, and the taste of Metro Manila, near-emptied of its mechanical and human contents, was not unlike wine. Driving through deserted roads gave me a glimpse into how an Arab must feel driving through desert roads. It brought back memories of the time when I used to ride the JD and DM buses from Katipunan to Quiapo (that took only 15 minutes), which now seems like ancient history even to me.

The air was redolent as much of summer ease as of Lenten penitence, which made me think of some of the things to love about living in this country. My list breezed past 10, but columns are not hospitable to more than 10 of the things to love about being in the Philippines—which does not include writing columns. So 10 it is:

One, Baguio and Boracay. Baguio is the old summer capital, Boracay the new one. Mountain and sea, take your pick. Though Baguio has been greatly ravaged by modernity—enough to make you sing (appropriately, Baguio being home to "folk" music) Joni Mitchell's line, "They paved paradise to put up a parking lot"—it still retains its charm, at least for me, aided in no small way by a rush of memories. I haven't been there in some time and find myself now and then longing for it.

Boracay, well, it makes a good claim to being the next best thing to paradise on earth, though some beaches in Bohol, notably in Panglao, can give it a run for its money. Personally, I find the addition of a night life a boon and not a bane: I'm not one of those who like to rough it up in the company only of the moon and stars. Beer and good company help to make the sand sparkle in the night. In any case, I don't much like dipping into the water, I just like walking on beaches. But that's another story.

If you like the beach, you'll probably like the people who inhabit it, too, especially the ones in Boracay. But I'll stop there lest I get into trouble.

Two, fruits. My all-time favorite is mangoes, which have no peer in the world. Of course, you'll find people from other Asian and Latin American countries boasting about their own mangoes, but I've tasted a variety of mangoes from all over the world, and I can say with reasonable certainty that none of them compares with ours. Our mangoes are the absolute best.

As well indeed as many of our other fruits, which teem all over the place at this time of year. I've always associated summer with fruits, the trees, which grew in abundance where I lived when I was a kid—and this was supposed to be a city!—groaning with the weight of them. The idea of buying fruits was inconceivable then. Fruits were not something you bought, they were something you picked. But that, too, now seems like ancient history.

Three, hometowns. The desolation of Metro Manila during Holy Week drove home the point that most residents of Metro Manila come from somewhere else in the country. "*Taga saan ka?*" (Where are you from?) is a normal question you ask of a Metro Manilan, which suggests that those whose antecedents for several generations date back to any part of the metropolis are the minority, probably a small minority. My own hometown is Naga City, though I was born in Manila. It is where I spent my boyhood and adolescence and learned my first language, which is Bicol. It is where I go to charge my psychic batteries. I barely know anybody there anymore from childhood, but the place itself holds a raging volcano of memories for me, which sends electrical surges through my soul. Hometowns give you a sense of bearing in a world—especially so this country—seemingly drifting in space, bound for nowhere.

Four, the sun. That, of course, is also something to hate about living in this country when the heat becomes especially ferocious at this time of year. But you live in a cold place, and truly you'll learn to love the sun. I've been in Europe in the bitter cold a couple of times and was instantly cured of Christmasy notions of winter wonderlands. Once when sunlight seeped through the gray skies in the Oxford area where I was visiting some years ago, I swear I thought I would see the natives fall on their knees and pray. The exultation was universal, the sighs of gratefulness spontaneous and audible.

I don't hate it that we only have two seasons in this country, the rainy and the dry, which in these days of El Niño and La Niña are not so easy to demarcate anymore. I like it that we do, if only because of the teeming street children Metro Manila in particular is home to. Can you imagine them lying in the pavement in the bitter cold? I have these images of Russians being picked up in the morning like litter after freezing to death from lying in the snow roaring drunk. Of course, the fact that we do have children sleeping on the pavement while Mike Arroyo barely inhabits princely suites in Las Vegas to watch Paquiao fight is something to hate about living in this country. But I leave that for the nonce.

Five, summer. It revives memories of Connie Francis belting out "V-a-c-a-t-i-o-n!" The kids are home from school, though "home," for those who have teenage sons in particular, is hugely debatable. Over the last several weeks, I've barely seen the shadow of my 17-year-old son. Well, I guess let them be. It's the time of their life, the best years of their life, the happiest years of their life. It won't come again.

(Concluded tomorrow.)

Pinoy prodigy needs help

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

FILIPINO CHILD VIOLIN PRODIGY CHINO Gutierrez is in trouble, and I sincerely hope President Macapagal-Arroyo and Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo will bail him out. Three years ago, the boy, then barely a teenager, obtained a high school scholarship in Munich as well as the opportunity to receive further violin training under the renowned Professor Ellermann, who considers him his star pupil. His parents, Lamberto Gutierrez and the former Bambi Sebastian, grand-daughter of the late Amb. Proceso Sebastian, decided to relocate from Manila in order to care for their young son. To help them with their upkeep in expensive Germany, former Philippine Ambassadors Minerva Falcon and Jose Zaide allowed Lamberto, a computer expert, to do work for the embassy website from his base in Munich, at a salary of 800 euros a month. With that job, Gutierrez and his family were able to make do, with some help from relatives in Manila such as lawyer Linda Sebastian, Bambi's aunt. It also enabled him to secure a residence permit.

* * *

The result of being one family showed in Chino's remarkable performance. In November 2004, he topped math contests among all the high schools in Bavaria, and in February this year, he became the state champion. In one year, he also caught up with his classmates who already had four years of studies in Latin, and was asked by his Latin teacher to co-author with him a book on etymology in five languages!

Simultaneously, Chino underwent rigorous violin training, practicing a punishing four hours a day. Manila was treated to his first public performance as violin soloist in the concert in honor of maestro Oscar Yatco's 75th birthday, with the maestro himself conducting the orchestra. Now he's being prepared by Ellerman for an international violin competition in August.

* * *

When Ambassador Delia Albert replaced Zaide last year, one of her first official acts was to terminate Lamberto's job contract. Talk is that she was given the impression that Lamberto was a ghost employee, but sadly he was not given a chance to air his side. Despite the intercession of Zaide himself and former presidential adviser for culture Leticia Ramos Shahani and other friends, Lamberto was not restored to his job.

Albert is reportedly insisting that Chino just stay with a foster family once his parents go back to Manila, but the boy says he needs his parents with him. As he put it in a letter to some friends, "It's a bit difficult to explain, but the demands and needs of my situation are very different from those of a typical student studying abroad—concertizing, competing actively in two fields (math/science and music), attending two schools simultaneously, traveling constantly to workshops, performances, etc. Even the physical and psychological demands are entirely different. It can get really stressful, emotionally draining and, at times, very frustrating—but it's a challenge that I relish and do not back away from."

What this 15-year-old prodigy only asks "is that my parents be allowed to stay with me so that I can continue performing at my optimum level." He says "there's a lot of wisdom in allowing prodigies who are sent abroad to stay with their parents, as in the case of Cecile Licad, Rowena Arrieta, Aries Caces, Lea Salonga, to name a few."

Chino is the pride of our country and there's no doubt that he'll go far, with his prodigious talent. Giving his father back his old job is a small price to pay for the development of that talent. All that the family is asking for is that Lamberto be reinstated so that he can keep his residence permit, which expires this May, and they can keep body and soul together in Munich while Chino is training for the world stage. Surely this little help we owe Chino, Madame President and Secretary Romulo.

* * *

A few weeks back, Iloilo Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, decried what he termed as the vested interests operating behind the people's initiative. Obviously he was referring to administration leaders, whom he accused of seeking to perpetuate themselves in power through Charter change.

But a closer look at recent pronouncements of the opposition would also put into question their own motives. For instance, some senators and House members have said that they would work for Charter change provided President Arroyo leaves her office first. They are making her ouster a precondition for Cha-cha and not its merits. Isn't this vested interest of the first degree? Moreover, it's on record that some vocal anti-Cha-cha politicos have earlier advocated the very economic and political reforms they are now criticizing.

* * *

For instance, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero spearheaded in 1999-2000 the House "Bright Boys," a group tasked to push then President Joseph Estrada's Charter amendments, called Constitutional Correction for Reform and Development. With him then were Alan Peter Cayetano, Rodolfo Albano III and Edmund Reyes. The PCIJ reported in 1999 that the Bright Boys were presented to the media as the "Speakers' Bureau" that would conduct a widespread campaign to defend the proposed amendments to the Constitution. Tasked to head the Palace's Concord Task Force was Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora.

Even in the Senate, there have been staunch advocates of Charter change during the Estrada era, among them Mar Roxas who, as trade secretary in 2000, batted for Concord, a key program of the Erap administration. Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel has also been fighting for federalism, a key component of the constitutional reforms proposed by GMA's Consultative Commission on Constitutional Amendment.

Why were they for Cha-cha then and against it now?

Heritage homes in Bagac

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THANKS TO OUR FRIENDS NOLI AND PEACHY Yamsuan, we spent much of Holy Week in Bagac, Bataan, in an old *bahay na bato* that once stood in Meycauayan, Bulacan but has been transplanted—original hardwood floors, doors, ornately carved lintels, adobe blocks, Machuca tiles and all—to a small "village" of heritage houses.

The houses, nine of them, can be found in a compound owned by Jerry and Tes Acuzar, who are turning their love for antiques and heritage architecture into a dream project. As they envision it, the Acuzars hope to create a village of old houses and other structures, including a schoolhouse, a town hall, and even a small *kapilya* that will bring visitors back to the past and give them a glimpse of how Filipinos lived centuries ago, "before all evidence of it is lost," says Jerry.

Only a few of the houses in the compound are liveable these days, the rest are still in the process of reconstruction, including a huge *bahay na bato* transplanted from Candaba, Pampanga, a square structure with a tiled roof from Quezon where President Manuel Quezon is supposed to have stayed, and a small residence with delicate filigree railings that Jerry says he fell in love with when the owners showed him a picture of the original structure. "By the time we got there, the house had already been torn apart," Jerry recalls. "The owners were getting ready to sell it piecemeal, but when I saw the picture of the house, I decided I wanted to save it."

While contractors and antique dealers are making good money these days buying old houses, having them torn down and then separately selling the old wood and the architectural features, the Acuzars decided to buy entire houses that they would restore as fully and accurately, using as much of the original material as possible, in their compound.

* * *

"IF YOU had seen the old houses in their original sites, you would not even think they still had a future," Tes recounts. "Some houses were so dark and dusty inside, with rotting floors and sagging posts you would think they were about to fall down."

The Acuzars bring a team of carpenters, structural engineers and an architect to document as much of the original structure as possible, to save as much of the original materials as they can, and to guide them when they reconstruct the old houses in Bagac. A contractor himself, Jerry personally checks on the progress of each restoration project, driving down from Balanga where the Acuzars originate. And while bidding for the houses can be intense, they say the owners give them an edge since they promise to recreate the original structure, giving the old worn-down houses new lives.

We managed to wangle a stay in the Meycauayan house through the courtesy of Bataan Bishop Socrates Villegas. Actually, the Yamsuans had been invited to Balanga to cover the Holy Week activities at the cathedral, and we—our family, as well as another friend, Jesselynn dela Cruz and her daughters—simply tagged along to take advantage of the long break.

* * *

WE HAD no idea what awaited us as we drove through the narrow, winding streets of the seaside town of Bagac. All Bishop Soc told us was that we would be staying in an "old restored house." But as we drove down the dusty track and through the rusty iron gate, we couldn't help but "ooh" and "aah" as we beheld a scene straight out of a historical movie, with antique houses in various stages of completion loosely clustered around a narrow lane.

The ground floor of the Meycauayan house is still to be finished, but the second floor already has three bedrooms and two bathrooms, each with modern amenities. Huge windows with sliding capiz panes can be found all over the house, as well as a sturdy wooden floor still bearing old cuff marks.

Across from "our" house was a charming dwelling that had been uprooted from Tondo, distinctive because of the handsome metal awnings above each window and the panes of colored glass.

When they are in Bagac, the Acuzars stay in the first house built in the compound, fashioned from old house parts because they hadn't yet at the time latched onto the idea of restoring old houses in their entirety. "We love it though because of the wonderful views from the balcony," shared Tes. "We can see the mountains, the river and even the beach."

One very warm night, we spotted the Acuzars and their guests dining beneath a grove of trees lit by twinkling light globes, a scene that evoked memories of a more gracious age.

* * *

WHILE we did our share of swimming, boating and just lazing around in the evening, we did find time for Holy Week reflection.

On Good Friday, after the services at the cathedral, we left Balanga just as the procession of images was starting, but got held up on the way back to Bagac by two other processions. In Bagac, the procession was highlighted by penitents, including a "Christ" figure who staggered through the streets bearing a wooden cross on his back, and what we dubbed "women in black," female penitents all covered in black (including their faces) and walking barefoot.

On Black Saturday, deciding to leave for Manila early to beat the Easter Sunday crush, we invited ourselves over for breakfast at the "Bahay Pari," the residence of Bishop Soc. This, too, is a part of the Acuzars' project, a charming old house from San Miguel, Bulacan, that was transplanted onto a property donated by the Banzon family.

We had thought we were going to Bagac for some peace and quiet and a spot of swimming, but what we hadn't bargained for was a tantalizing glimpse of a couple's dream project, one that, we hope, will succeed in taking us back to the past and give visitors a deeper appreciation of our heritage and rich history.

Turning point at Chernobyl

WORLD VIEW

Mikhail S. Gorbachev

THE NUCLEAR MELTDOWN AT CHERNOBYL 20 years ago this month, even more than my launch of *perestroika*, was perhaps the real cause of the collapse of the Soviet Union five years later. Indeed, the Chernobyl catastrophe was a historic turning point: there was the era before the disaster, and there is the very different era that has followed.

The very morning of the explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear station on April 26, 1986, the Politburo met to discuss the situation, and then organized a government commission to deal with the consequences. The commission was to control the situation, and to ensure that serious measures were taken, particularly in regard to people's health in the disaster zone. Moreover, the Academy of Science established a group of leading scientists, who were immediately dispatched to the Chernobyl region.

The Politburo did not immediately have appropriate and complete information that would have reflected the situation after the explosion. Nevertheless, it was the general consensus that we should openly deliver the information upon receiving it. This would be in the spirit of the *glasnost* policy that was by then already established in the Soviet Union.

Thus, claims that the Politburo engaged in concealment of information about the disaster is far from the truth. One reason I believe that there was no deliberate deception is that, when the governmental commission visited the scene right after the disaster and stayed overnight in Polesie, near Chernobyl, its members all had dinner with regular food and water, and they moved about without respirators, like everybody else who worked there. If the local administration or the scientists knew the real impact of the disaster, they would not have risked doing this.

In fact, nobody knew the truth, and that is why all our attempts to receive full information about the extent of the catastrophe were in vain. We initially believed that the main impact of the explosion would be in Ukraine, but Belarus, to the northwest, was hit even worse, and then Poland and Sweden suffered the consequences.

Of course, the world first learned of the Chernobyl disaster from Swedish scientists, creating the impression that we were hiding something. But in truth we had nothing to hide, as we simply had no information for a day and a half. Only a few days later, we learned that what happened was not a simple accident, but a genuine nuclear catastrophe: an explosion of a Chernobyl's fourth reactor.

Although the first report on Chernobyl appeared in Pravda on April 28, the situation was far from clear. For example, when the reactor blew up, the fire was immediately put out with water, which only worsened the situation as nuclear particles began spreading through the atmosphere. Meanwhile, we were still able to take measures in helping people within the disaster zone; they were evacuated, and more than 200 medical organizations were involved in testing the population for radiation poisoning.

There was a serious danger that the contents of the nuclear reactor would seep into the soil, and then leak into the Dnepr river, thus endangering the population of Kiev and other cities along the riverbanks. Therefore, we started the job of protecting the river banks, initiating a total deactivation of the Chernobyl plant. The resources of a huge country were mobilized to control the devastation, including work to prepare the sarcophagus that would encase the fourth reactor.

The Chernobyl disaster, more than anything else, opened the possibility of much greater freedom of expression, to the point that the system as we knew it could no longer continue. It made absolutely clear how important it was to continue the policy of glasnost, and I must say that I started to think about time in terms of pre-Chernobyl and post-Chernobyl.

The price of the Chernobyl catastrophe was overwhelming, not only in human terms, but also economically. Even today, the legacy of Chernobyl affects the economies of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Some even suggest that the economic price for the USSR was so high that it stopped the arms race, as I could not keep building arms while paying to clean up Chernobyl.

This is wrong. My declaration of Jan. 15, 1986, is well known around the world. I addressed arms reduction, including nuclear arms, and I proposed that by the year 2000 no country should have atomic weapons. I personally felt a moral responsibility to end the arms race. But Chernobyl opened my eyes like nothing else: it showed the horrible consequences of nuclear power, even when it is used for non-military purposes. One could now imagine much more clearly what might happen if a nuclear bomb exploded. According to scientific experts, one SS-18 rocket could contain a hundred Chernobyls.

Unfortunately, the problem of nuclear arms is still very serious today. Countries that have them—the members of the so-called "nuclear club"—are in no hurry to get rid of them. On the contrary, they continue to refine their arsenals, while countries without nuclear weapons want them, believing that the nuclear club's monopoly is a threat to world peace.

The 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl catastrophe reminds us that we should not forget the horrible lesson taught to the world in 1986. We should do everything in our power to make all nuclear facilities safe and secure. We should also start seriously working on the production of the alternative sources of energy.

The fact that world leaders now increasingly talk about this imperative suggests that the lesson of Chernobyl is finally being understood.

Project Syndicate

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last president of the USSR, is chair of the Gorbachev Foundation in Moscow and the head of the International Green Cross.

To go or to stay?

YOUNG BLOOD

Jasmine Valerie M. dela Cruz

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

SITUATION: BRAIN DRAIN IN THE PHILIPPINES. MORE specifically, professionals—doctors, accountants, teachers—taking up nursing and caregiver courses to get out of the country fast. Their goal is not really to serve, to care for the sick, the incapacitated and the old, but just to get out. Fly out to somewhere, to be anywhere but here and have a chance to earn more, and then hope that a better, brighter life would follow the money.

Can anyone blame them. Look around you. Do you think there is hope for this country? No? I thought so.

The effect of the brain drain is a lack of doctors and health care professionals, especially in the rural areas. This is not an an exaggeration. There are some towns that do not have any doctor.

My (old) reaction to this situation was to say, "Stay." If every person capable of providing quality health care would leave this country, who would be left to take care of the Filipinos? How can you expect this country to rise out of this depression if you leave it incapable of caring for itself?

It has often been said that the future of a nation lies in the hands of the youth. Also, that education is the key to a brighter tomorrow. But reflect upon this now and tell me, how can you expect a malnourished, sickly girl to get the best out of her schooling when she frequently has to be absent from her classes due to what should be manageable illnesses? She might get a good education and subsequently have the chance to brighten up this country's future if only a doctor were there when she was stricken with bronchopneumonia, or whatever.

Were we ever taught that whenever crises arise we should run and just save ourselves the heartaches? No, we are told to stay, hold on and try to fix whatever the problem is.

So, it was with conviction that I told myself and anyone else who bothered to ask that I would stay, despite the constant urging of my relatives to seek "greener pastures" abroad after I graduated from medical school. "There is hope," I would often answer back when told that this country was going down the drain.

But there comes a time when you bump your head and you wake up and see everything as they really are. For me it happened one early Monday morning, as I was on my way to school. Sitting in heavy traffic, I had these potentially life-changing realizations. Traffic was bad. Jeepneys were clogging up all three lanes near the Lambingan Bridge. As if occupying one lane wasn't enough, they were parking on all three lanes, insensitive to all the trouble they were causing, competing with each other for passengers. This made me think, "Are these the people I want to help? Look at them! They don't even want to help themselves, or each other! They don't care for anybody but themselves! In their self-centeredness, in thinking only of what would be good for them, they have brought the traffic to a standstill, blocking any chance for traffic to move and in the process also denying themselves the opportunity to move forward. And here I am, stubbornly trying to find hope for this forlorn country, wanting to stay and take care of these apathetic citizens! I must really be out of my mind!"

I am not totally disheartened—not yet, anyway. I have equivocal feelings of staying here or starting a new life in the United States. And this saddens me. My once strong belief that there is hope for the Philippines is slowly fading.

The social cancer Jose Rizal wrote about in "Noli" and "Fili" I have never really understood as well as I do now. And it leaves me hurting, and it is enough to make me cry. The desperate feeling that your own country is doomed and that you cannot do anything about it is very depressing.

At present, I am waging this battle within myself. It is as if there are two personas inside me. One is practical, and she likes the idea of starting a new life in the States sans all the tribulations that the government, the economy, the undisciplined, indolent Filipinos—the entire system—are causing. The other is a stubborn idealist, insisting there is still hope for the Filipinos.

Hope for the country? Change? I have developed some distaste for these concepts now. Is there really hope for the Philippines, for the Filipinos?

Some say that only a radical change of the system can alter the fate of this country. Well, I honestly believe that we have desecrated whatever meaning is left of the original Edsa Revolution by repeating it and ending up with a government worse than the one we helped to pull down.

But all hope is not lost in me. I was at Manila's Baywalk one Friday night recently, and more than the love songs sung by the band, I was touched by the sight of one disabled guy selling roses, a very sleepy little girl offering me her magic wands while trying to suppress a yawn, and another man selling *balut, chicharon* and quail eggs, probably so that his family could survive one more day. They really got to me. I recognized the tiredness in their eyes. I tried to imagine what it would be like to be in their shoes. Even just thinking that way really hurt. Even the most tiring week of my life would not compare to a day in the life of one of them. And as I thanked God for the blessings in my life, I prayed for them.

Then I realized that these were the people I was thinking of leaving. They had no one here to care for them. You couldn't expect our self-serving politicians to fight for the rights of these small people. Or maybe they would—during the elections—but beyond that?

When I become a doctor, I will have something to offer to these small people: quality health care. Leaving the country would mean one doctor less to take care of them. Even the doctors who continue to practice here in the Philippines cannot all be expected to have the idealism to care for the marginalized. And if I stay, will I still be idealistic enough to serve them?

I haven't made a firm decision about whether to stay or go. The battle I am waging within myself grows more and more intense every day as I try to figure out where this country is going under the present administration. I cannot say for certain what I really want in life. But eventually, I will have to decide. In the meantime, I earnestly hope that some miracle will take place to save this country of ours.

Jasmine Valerie M. dela Cruz, 23, is a second year medical student at the Faculty of Medicine and Surgery, University of Santo Tomas.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or, if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

LETTERS

Challenges of a strengthening peso

ACCORDING TO AUTHORITIES QUOTED often in the INQUIRER, the strengthening peso is a two-edged sword that cuts many ways.

On the plus side, the cost of paying down the national debt is reduced automatically because the debt is paid back with "cheaper money."

On the downside, domestic exports become more "expensive" and, therefore, harder to sell. Homegrown industries—the backbone of any economy—are among the first to feel the squeeze.

Another problem is that OFW dollars coming into the country buy less, affecting millions of needy recipients expecting more. For example, if the difference between a P55:$1 and a P50:$1 exchange rate were applied to all of last year's $12 billion in OFW remittances, it would have resulted in a net loss in spendable income of $120 million.

A purchasing power shortfall was already being felt by OFW families during the first quarter of this year, and to the same extent by thousands of tourists arriving at Naia and Cebu. Not to mention the 250,000 or so foreigners who live here most of the year.

Let's face it, with dozens of comparable havens to choose from in Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and in the sub-tropical Americas, people are going to shop around for the best vacation and retirement deals they can find.

In my opinion, the negative aspects of a strengthening peso—and therefore the Philippines—need to be offset by improvements in other areas.

Chief among them, in my experience, is for the country to turn its "English-spoken-here" brag into reality, and make Americans in particular feel less "strange" except when they open their wallets.

—**ELLIOTT ANDERSON,**
PO Box 2796 Ozamiz City 7200

Fully functional power barge in Iloilo

I REFER TO INQUIRER'S NEWS ITEM HEADlined "Power crisis looms over Panay" by Hazel P. Villa. (PDI, 4/1/06) It quoted a certain Nelson Jomena, plant manager of Napocor's Panay Diesel Plant based in Dingle, alleging the following:

"The plant was already 10 years old when it arrived and was not properly maintained by Enron, which had a contract with Napocor (National Power Corporation) under a Build-Operate-Transfer scheme."

Indeed, the plant (formerly known as the Pinamucan Power Plant and currently known as the Panay Diesel Power Plant 3 or PDPP 3) was previously under a 10-year BOT contract with Napocor. However, Batangas Power Corp. (BPC), owner of the Pinamucan Power Plant) takes strong exception to Jomena's allegation that the plant "was not properly maintained." During the 10-year term of its BOT contract with Napocor, BPC fulfilled all of its obligations to Napocor, which would not have been possible if the plant were not properly maintained. In fact, prior to the transfer of the plant to Napocor on July 22, 2003, Napocor dispatched the plant at its contracted capacity of 110.25 megawatts (requiring all eight of its engine-generators to run at full capacity) without any problems.

Although our BPC team has since moved on to other pursuits, we all took great pride in caring for and handing over a fully functional plant to Napocor—albeit with the normal wear and tear of a 10-year-old plant. Based on that news story, Jomena's allegation that the plant "was not properly maintained" is false and irresponsible, inappropriately besmirching the sound record and performance of BPC.

—**MANUEL P. GALLEGO,**
president, Batangas Power Corp.
3/F Corinthian Plaza,
121 Paseo de Roxas, 1226 Makati City

Without political will, fight against poverty is lost

IF THE PERSON ASSIGNED TO HEAD A GOVernment program is any indicator as to how much premium Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo puts in it, then one can easily say she does not sincerely care about fighting poverty, that the problem is last in her list of priorities, and that everything else she mouths about "fighting poverty" is nothing but lip service.

This is our conclusion based on her appointment of Datu Zamzamin Ampatuan to head the National Anti-Poverty Commission. According to a recent INQUIRER news story (PDI, 3/29/06), Ampatuan is clueless on the poverty threshold in the country; believes that stamping out poverty is a utopian dream; blames the Filipinos' abject living standards on their laziness, lack of skills and low IQ; and claims that being poor should not be taken "negatively" because "even the Bible praises being poor" and it even calls the poor "children of God."

Today, there is so much inequality in our land. Independent surveys tell of rising hunger among our people. Runaway inflation, exacerbated by the imposition of new taxes, has caused a sharp rise in the prices of basic goods and services, making it much harder for ordinary Filipinos to make ends meet.

The government is trumpeting the strengthening of the peso and the rise in portfolio investment. But we ask: Who is really benefiting from all this? Certainly not the Filipino poor.

The national budget is going to hit the trillion mark for the first time in Philippine history. But the allocations for basic social services, like education and health—already measly in last year's budget—have been cut further.

To be sure, the creditors of the Philippine government are happy with the 2006 budget as one third of it is earmarked for debt service. With P48 billion to P250 billion of public money lost to massive graft and corruption, unscrupulous individuals—in government and the private sector—will continue laughing their way to the bank. The consistent trade deficit and the unequal trading structure have sounded the death knell for many domestic industries. Agrarian reform, rural development, and other redistributive mechanisms remain elusive dreams for the rural and urban poor.

Stamping out poverty is indeed a utopian dream if one does not have a clear analysis as to its structural causes. It is even more utopian if one has no desire, ambition or political will to fight it.

But for serious anti-poverty advocates and activists, it is not only possible, it is a moral imperative. And this can only be achieved by recognizing that the primary stakeholders in the fight against poverty—the poor and the socially-excluded—have the right to determine their own destiny. And it is government's inherent duty to provide the enabling environment for this process.

Unfortunately, government's energies seem to be directed elsewhere, like the Cha-cha.

—**MARIA VICTORIA R. RAQUIZA,**
national coordinator,
Global Call to Action against Poverty
(GCAP)-Philippines,
mraquiza@yahoo.com

IF you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@ inquirer.com.ph

Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Republika ng Pilipinas
Republic of the Philippines
Kagawaran ng Tanggulang Pambansa
Department of National Defense

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

(DND-Proper Procurement of IT Equipments)

I. The Department of National Defense, through DND-Proper Bid and Awards Committee, invites suppliers/manufacturers/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following projects:

Name of Project	Description	Approved Budget for Contract (ABC)
A. Procurement of Desktop Computer	Supply and Delivery of Desktop Computer for DND-Proper Offices	PhP 2,375,000.00
B. Procurement of Laptop Computer	Supply and Delivery of Laptop Computer for DND-Proper Offices	2,380,000.00
	Total	PhP 4,755,000.00

II. The schedule of activities are as follows:

ACTIVITIES	VENUE	DATE	TIME
Issuance of Bid Documents	Procurement Branch, OAS Bldg., DND	April 18, 2005	9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Pre-Bid Conference	OAS Annex Bldg.	April 26, 2006	9:00 AM – 12:00 NN
Deadline for Submission / Opening of Bids	OAS Annex Bldg.	May 08, 2006	9:00 AM – 5:00 PM
Bid Evaluation	These shall be in accordance with the prescribed periods allowed in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR)-A of R.A. 9184 dated 10 January 2003		
Post-Qualification			
Issuance of Notice of Award			

III. Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of non-refundable amount as indicated below to the DND Proper BAC Secretariat, Procurement Branch, Office of Administrative Services, Camp General Emilio Aguinaldo, Quezon City, Tel. No. 911-8118.

PROJECT	COST OF BIDDING DOCUMENTS
A. Procurement of Desktop Computer	PhP 2,400.00
B. Procurement of Laptop Computer	Php 2,400.00

IV. The eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted. All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations Part-A (IRR-A).

V. To facilitate eligibility checking, manufacturers and/or suppliers who wish to participate in the public bidding may apply for registration with the DND-Proper BAC Secretariat at least fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled submission and opening of bids for the procurement projects they wish to participate.

VI. The OSND assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

VII. The OSND reserves the right to reject any or all bids, wiave any formality and award the Contract to the bidder whose proposal is the most advantageous to the government as evaluated by the DND-Proper Bids and Awards Committee (DND-Proper BAC).

VIII. The Invitation is also posted in the DBM Procurement Service website at www.procurementservice.org., and the DND website, in accordance with the IRR-A of R.A. 9184. Further, it shall also be posted at conspicuous places in the premises of the Department of National Defense (DND).

(Sgd.) **ASSISTANT SECRETARY RUBEN F CIRON**
Chairman, DND-Proper BAC

(PDI – April 18 & 25, 2006)

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites suppliers/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project/ Brief Description	**Supply and delivery of eight (8) units Electric Hand Pallet Truck with Lifter (electric pedestrian medium stacker swift), per BSP specifications.**
Approved Budget for the Contract	**P 3,200,000.00**
Delivery Period	**Within Ninety (90) calendar days after receipt of Purchase Order.**

Prospective bidders should have undertaken a similar project within the last five (5) years with an amount of at least 50% of the Approved Budget for the Contract. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated responsive bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows.

Activities	Schedule
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	11 April 2006 to 4 May 2006
2. Pre-bid Conference	9:30 a.m. 5 May 2006
3. Opening of Bids	23 May 2006 – 2:00 p.m.
4. Bid Evaluation	These shall be in accordance with the prescribed periods allowed in the Implementing Rules & Regulations (IRR)-A of R.A. No. 9184 dated 10 January 2003.
5. Post-qualification	
6. Notice of Award	

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **P1,600.00** to the BSP Cashier.

The BSP assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify the bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

The BSP reserves the right to reject any and all bid proposals, or declare the bidding a failure, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that a contract shall be entered into as a result of this Invitation.

(Sgd.) **JUAN DE ZUÑIGA, JR.**
Chairman

(PDI – April 18, 2006)

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES
Official Depository Bank of the Republic of the Philippines
1598 M.H. Del Pilar cor. Dr. Quintos Sts. Malate, Manila
Telephone Nos. 405-7366 & 405-7247/405-7695(direct lines)
Trunklines 522-0000 & 551-2200 locals 7695/7366

INVITATION TO BID

Sealed proposals together with the 10% bid bond for the purchase on **CASH BASIS** of the Bank properties listed below will be received at the **Special Assets Department, 30th Floor, LBP Plaza, Malate, Manila** not later than **April 26, 2006 @ 3:00 P.M.** at which place, date & time, said proposals will be opened in the presence of attending bidders.

In case of **CLOSELY CLUSTERED TOP BIDS** (defined as having the second highest bid which is not below 90% of the highest bid), the opening of the sealed bids will be immediately followed by an open bidding in which all bidders whose bids are not below 80% of the highest bid may participate. **The minimum increase in the open bidding should not be lower than P1,000.00.**

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION		LOCATION	MINIMUM BID
1	113.50 sq.m. commercial condominium - Unit 28 D	28th Floor, IBM Plaza Condominium, Eastwood Avenue, Eastwood City Commercial Complex, Libis, Quezon City	5,107,500.00
2	135.50 sq.m. commercial condominium - Unit 28 E		6,097,500.00
3	107.20 sq.m. commercial condominium - Unit 28 F		4,824,000.00
4	122.30 sq.m. commercial condominium - Unit 28 G		5,503,500.00
5	110.80 sq.m. commercial condominium - Unit 28 H		4,986,000.00
6	115.70 sq.m. commercial condominium - Unit 28 I		5,206,500.00
7	107.20 sq.m. commercial condominium - Unit 28 J		4,824,000.00
8	109.40 sq.m. commercial condominium - Unit 28 K		4,923,000.00
9	10,000 sq.m. lot w/ 980 sq.m. warehouse	Maharlika Highway, San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija	7,715,500.00

For Item No. 9, public bidding will be held at LBP Leasing Corp., 15th Floor, SSHG Law Center, No. 105 Paseo de Roxas St., Makati City. For inquiry & bidding forms, please contact Ms. Riza Hernandez at Tel. No. 818-2200.

For the complete description of Item Nos. 1-8 including bidding forms, you may look for Ms. May C. Javate or Ms. Cecilia DC. Sacay of Special Assets Department (SPAD), Land Bank of the Philippines located at the 30th Floor, LBP Plaza, 1598 M.H. Del Pilar cor. Dr. Quintos Sts., Malate, Manila.

Prospective bidders are enjoined to inspect the above-listed properties before submitting their bids. The sale of the properties shall be **on "AS-IS-WHERE-IS" basis.** The winning bidder/s shall take possession of the awarded properties without seeking assistance from the Bank. The award in favor of the winning bidder/s shall be subject to the approval of the LBP approving authorities.

If for any reason the above-mentioned date is declared a non-working holiday, then the public bidding shall be held on the next working day at the same time and place aforementioned.

LAND BANK RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, TO WAIVE ANY FORMALITY THEREIN AND TO ACCEPT THE BID MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE BANK. THE DECISION OF THE LBP SHALL BE FINAL AND BINDING.

COMMITTEE ON ASSET DISPOSAL

(PDI–April 18, 2006)

REPUBLIKA NG PILIPINAS
KAGAWARAN NG KATARUNGAN
PANGASIWAAN SA PATALAAN NG LUPAIN
(LAND REGISTRATION AUTHORITY)
East Avenue cor. NIA Road
Quezon City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Republic of the Philippines
Delivery and Supply of Open Type Steel Shelves

The Land Registration Authority (LRA), through Special Allotment Release Order (SARO) No. BMB-C-05-0002248 intends to apply the sum of **PESOS: TWO MILLION FIVE HUNDRED TWENTY ONE THOUSAND AND NINETY (P2,521,090.00)** being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payment for the delivery and supply of 559 open type Steel Shelves for the Land Registration Authority located at LRA Building, East Avenue corner NIA Road, Diliman, Quezon City, to wit:

Articles and Specifications

Quantity	Unit	Description
559	units	Steel Shelves: open type; with five adjustable shelves, including top to bottom shelves; made from angular post 1.8mm x 1.5 x 1.5; Overall dimension: 72" x 36" x 18", with braces, bolts & nuts and mid support for shelves; painted with high grade gray baked auto enamel;gauge # 20.

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall automatically be rejected at Bid opening.

The Land Registration Authority (LRA) now invites eligible Bidders for the delivery and supply of 559 Open Type Steel Shelves. Delivery of the 559 OPEN TYPE STEEL SHELVES should be on or before September 01, 2006.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184, otherwise known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and is restricted to organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest on outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, as specified in Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183). Only bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The bidder with the lowest calculated bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine his responsiveness to the technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the Land Registration Authority and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by Interested Bidders on **May 02 to 08, 2006** from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of One Thousand Pesos (P1,000.00). The method of payment will be on cash basis. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The Land Registration Authority will hold a Pre-Bid conference open to all interested bidders on **May 15, 2006, 10:00 a.m. on the 5th Floor, Multi-Purpose Hall, LRA Building.**

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered on the 5th Floor, Multi-Purpose Hall, LRA Building on **May 29, 2006 at 10:00 a.m.** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in the form and amount indicated in the Bidding Documents. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid opening shall be on **May 29, 2006 at 10:00 a.m. on the 5th Floor, Multi-Purpose Hall, LRA Building.** Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the address below

The Land Registration Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders

(Sgd.) **EDILBERTO R. FELICIANO**
Chairman
LRA Bids and Awards Committee on
Procurement of Goods, Supplies and Materials
East Avenue corner NIA Road, Diliman, Q.C.
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(PDI–April 18 & 25, 2006)

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Peasant organizer killed in Negros

BACOLOD CITY—THREE UNIDENTIFIED ARMED men shot dead an organizer of a farmers' federation on Saturday while he and his wife were on their way home in Talisay City, Negros Occidental.

Rico Adeva, 39, a leader-organizer of Task Force Mapalad (TFM), suffered multiple bullet wounds—two in the head and one each in the stomach, right chest, mouth, left ear and hand.

Negros Occidental police director Senior Supt. Charles Calima said the police have yet to determine the motive and the identity of the perpetrators.

But the TFM, a federation of more than 300 farmers' organizations in Negros Occidental and Mindanao, said in a statement that they believed people opposed to the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) were behind Adeva's murder.

According to the victim's wife Nenita, she and Adeva went out of their house in Barangay Hermanas, Talisay at about 4 p.m. on Saturday to go to the village proper to buy some food.

To go there, the couple had to cross nearby Imbang River. But before doing so, Nenita said in the TFM statement that she saw three men wearing jackets rushing toward the river.

Nenita said in the TFM statement that she saw one of the three draw a pistol and hold her husband by the shoulder.

She said the man told Adeva to turn on his back and drop to the ground. As Adeva did so, the assailant shot him in the head.

The gunman's companion started shooting Adeva who was already lying.

A third suspect aimed his gun at her and told her to also lie.

In Quezon province, two unidentified motorcycle-riding assailants killed a farmer in Barangay Bignay Uno in Sariaya town on Black Saturday.

Information gathered by the INQUIRER showed that Teodoro Palama, 38, a resident of the village, had been an avid participant in several anti-government demonstrations.

Farmers' groups and multi-sectoral organizations were verifying whether the victim was their member.

Police said that as the victim was about to ride his bicycle, the suspects in a red, unlicensed Honda XRM, sneaked from behind and shot the victim once with a .45-cal. pistol, fatally hitting him in the head. Palama died on the spot.

The assailants fled after the shooting. *Carla Gomez, PDI Visayas Bureau and Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Cop nabbed for slaying of Bantay Dagat exec

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—A POLICEMAN WAS arrested yesterday after he was tagged as the lone gunman who shot and killed Elpedio "Jojo" dela Victoria, the city's illegal fishing crusader.

SPO1 Marcial Ocampo, intelligence officer of the police station in Minglanilla town, was brought to the headquarters of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group in Central Visayas (CIDG-7) for tactical interrogation.

Senior Supt. Jorge Corpus, CIDG-7 director, said Ocampo was brought to his office at about 3 p.m. "by his superior" whose name he refused to reveal.

He said he arrested Ocampo after witness pointed to the policeman as the one who repeatedly shot Dela Victoria outside his home in Talisay City, Cebu last Wednesday.

"We are 101 percent sure that he was the gunman," said Corpus, quoting the witnesses.

Senior Supt. Vicente Loot, Cebu provincial police director, told the INQUIRER that Ocampo's face matched the artist sketch of the gunman, which was made based on description provided by the witnesses.

He said during the discussion on the case yesterday, members of the police task force agreed to order Ocampo to report to the CIDG headquarters inside the Camp Sotero Cabahug along Gorordo Avenue in Cebu City.

Loot said four witnesses had positively identified Ocampo as the gunman.

Despite Ocampo's arrest, Corpus admitted that the case was far from being resolved as they have yet to determine the identity of the mastermind and the motive in the killing.

"It's still a long way to go," he told reporters yesterday.

Dela Victoria, 46, was the program director of the Cebu City Bantay Dagat Commission and the city's market administrator.

Priest starts 2,000-km journey on bike for Mindanao peace

BIKING priest Amado Picardal starts his 2,000-km journey around Mindanao hoping to deliver a message of peace and hope in a land that he said had a culture of death and violence. DENNIS JAY SANTOS/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

DAVAO CITY—CYCLING PRIEST Fr. Amado Picardal yesterday embarked on a 2,000 kilometer tour of Mindanao, in what he described as a bike for life and peace.

On the first day of his journey, Picardal was accompanied by Kidapawan Bishop Romulo Valles and 30 cycling priests of Davao and Tagum up to Monkayo in Compostela Valley province.

"There will be a priest who will accompany me on the first week up to Iligan," he said before setting off from this city.

On the second week, Picardal said two priests will accompany him around the Zamboanga Peninsula up to Cotabato.

On the last four days, he said, Bishop Valles will accompany him again along with 20 cycling priests from the Diocese of Kidapawan back to this city.

But most of the time, he will be pedaling alone.

Picardal's journey around Mindanao will take at least 21 days, in time for his silver anniversary in the priesthood on April 24.

"We want to bring the message of life and peace in a land with a culture of death and violence," Picardal said.

The Redemptorist priest, who completed a 23-day bike tour from this City to Pagudpud in Ilocos Norte in 2000, said that during his Mindanao tour, he would say Mass in parishes he would be passing by.

"Peace, war, drug addiction, human rights abuses and environmental crimes are among the key issues I will be delivering in my homily," he said.

Picardal, 52, said the armed conflict between the government and the New Peoples Army (NPA) has made civilians suffer and an end to the violence appears nowhere in sight.

He said the ceasefire between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government was a positive step toward peace in Mindanao but he is worried because an "agreement is still elusive."

"Every time there is a breakthrough (peace negotiation), there are forces and events that sabotage the process," he said.

The drug problem, he said is not as violent as armed conflicts, but it also "affected so many people."

Picardal also said the wanton disregard of the environment, through logging and mining, continue to pose a "threat to life." *Dennis Jay Santos with a report from Joselle d.R. Badilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Muslim group asks Senate to junk antiterror bill

COTABATO CITY—A GROUP composed of Muslim professionals urged the Senate on Saturday to junk the controversial anti-terror bill by claiming that the bombings in Mindanao were staged to justify the passage of the controversial measure.

The Union of Muslims for Morality and Truth (Ummat) said House Bill 4839 "undermines all of our constitutional civil and political rights."

Nasser Marohomsalic, Ummat convenor, said the bill was aimed at protecting the interest of some politicians, who are "hiding in a hypothetical veil of national security and protection."

"If the Senate chooses to abandon the people's side on this issue, we will take the battle to the streets," Marohomsalic, a former human rights commissioner, said.

He said that Muslim communities in Metro Manila, including those belonging to Balik Islam (Muslim reverts), fear that their rights will be more easily violated once the bill is passed.

Marohomsalic said one example being cited was the Maharlika Village crackdowns and warrantless arrests at the height of the government's campaign against suspected terror groups.

There were also the alleged raids conducted on Balik Islam Centers and schools on mere suspicions these were being used by terrorists.

"The ATB will put Muslim communities in perennial fear. With the Moro peoples' collective experience of being scapegoats in the government's wars on terror, we will always be living in paranoia and insecurity. The bane of the war policy in Mindanao seems to be haunting Muslims everywhere we go," he said.

Zainab Ampatuan, deputy secretary general of the Suara Bangsamoro Partylist group, said many Muslims believe that the bombings in Mindanao were being used to justify the passage of the bill.

"After pronouncing the urgent passage of ATB to the Congress because of the blast in Jolo, it seemed that the government is really in a hurry to put the nation under ultimate control. Muslims are adversely stereotyped as terrorist," Ampatuan said.

Ren Jalaluddin Ropeta, vice chair of the Moro-Christian Peoples Alliance, said the bombings in the videoke bar and the Sulu Cooperative Store in Sulu and at the bus terminal in Digos City could be military-orchestrated to justify and pressure the Senate into passing the antiterrorism bill. *Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Suspect yields, but says he's not killer

INNOCENT AKO, SUMUSUKO LANG!

BUTUAN CITY—THE SUSPECT in the assassination of City Prosecutor Godofredo Paceño Jr. has yielded to authorities.

But Bonifacio Dandanon, alias Datu Sumpatan, said he did not kill Paceño.

Dandanon, in an interview with the INQUIRER on Saturday, claimed that at the time of the killing, he was in his hometown in Sibagat, Agusan del Sur.

The Task Force Paceño, led by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), identified Dandanon based on a police artist's sketch of the suspected gunman. Two witnesses helped the police in identifying the killer.

Paceño was on his way home on April 7 when shot aboard a jeep by a lone gunman.

Dandanon said he decided to surrender on April 11 in order to clear his name.

"I was at the house of Datu Kaligtasan all the time and many people have seen me there and can attest to my presence there. I was not in Butuan City at that time so how could I have killed him," Dandanon said.

Danielito Lalusis, assistant director of the NBI-Caraga, said they have started conducting a more thorough investigation of Dandanon.

Lalusis said despite Dandanon's denial, he remains the primary suspect.

"An informant told the task force he saw Dandanon, together with an unidentified man, on board a motorcycle inside the premises of the Hall of Justice of this city days before the killing. He again saw the suspect and his companion in a restaurant where the victim was also eating together with a friend, apparently conducting surveillance on Paceño," he said.

Lalusis said the task force is still waiting for the results of the preliminary investigation conducted by the city prosecutor's office, following the filing of murder charges against Dandanon and two unidentified suspects.

Horacio Gonzales, Caraga regional prosecutor, said they were outraged over the killing of Paceño.

"We condemn the killing of Prosecutor Paceño but we'll just leave this case to the investigating agencies. I trust that this crime will be solved early and the killer prosecuted so that justice will be afforded to the family," Gonzales said. *Ma. Kristina Cassion, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Gov doubts mine spill probe's independence

SORSOGON GOV. RAUL LEE YESterday expressed doubts over the impartiality of a commission created by Malacañang to look into Lafayette's mining operations as its chair, Sorsogon Bishop Arturo Bastes, and some of its members, are "strong supporters of antimining groups."

In an interview with radio station dzRH, he said the commission is "a waste of time and effort" since he and the five mayors of Sorsogon's coastal towns facing Rapu Rapu island, where Lafayette operates, were not even invited by the commission to talk about the mercury scare that had already been proven to be nonexistent.

Members of the commission, however, said in earlier interviews that their independence is assured and asked critics of the commission to watch its proceedings to see for themselves how the commission worked.

Bastes is a staunch anti-mining advocate and leads the campaign to force Lafayette Philippines Inc. (LPI) out of Rapu Rapu where the Australian firm operates a copper and gold mining site that spilled cyanide-laced wastes into the town's waters.

"Let's use strong evidence backed by scientific analysis, not theories," said Lee in the dzRH interview.

Earlier lectures given by LPI chair Carlos Dominguez on the benefits that LPI would bring to Albay and the region were met with protests from antimining advocates.

Mayor Dick Galicia chided the LPI new management for bragging and making promises since it took over in January but failing to start a single project in Rapu, Rapu.

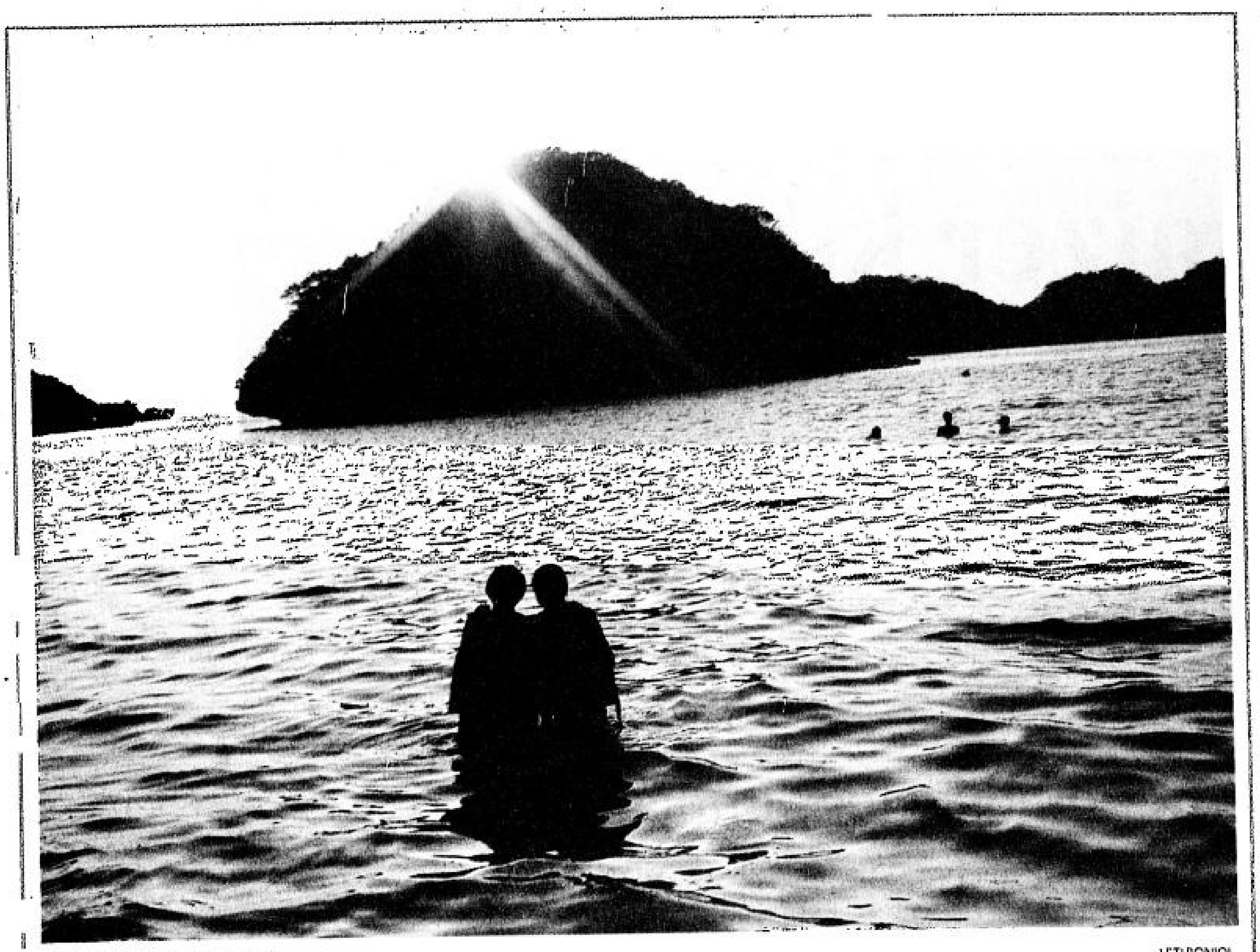
Albay Vice Gov. James Calisin earlier testified at the Rapu-Rapu Fact-Finding Commission (RFC) that the Sangguniang Panlalawigan had asked the Lafayette for a copy of its rehabilitation plan when it started its mining exploration in Rapu-Rapu five years ago.

Results of an independent study conducted by the University of the Philippines Natural Sciences Research Institute (UP-NSRI) have confirmed previous findings by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) that the mercury level in the coastal areas of Sorsogon is safe.

The Albay provincial council asked the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) district office to investigate the disinformation drive on the alleged mercury contamination in Sorsogon.

LPI officials said the firm would spend about P320 million annually for its supplies, including groceries, fish and meat, and office needs that would be locally purchased.

"The benefits to Rapu-Rapu and the surrounding communities will not end even after the company had closed the mine," Dominguez said. *Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



LETI BONIOL

HUNDRED ISLANDS
Early birds take a dip in the waters of the Governor's Island, one of the biggest island in the Hundred Islands National Park found in Barangay Lucap, Alaminos, Pangasinan. Marine life is beginning to grow again underneath the waters, a result of the banning of illegal fishing in the park.

US troops get credit for village's facelift

TALIPAO, SULU—BARANGAY SAmak, once known as a lair of the Abu Sayyaf here, is getting a major facelift.

US soldiers are currently busy building schools, roads and other infrastructure in the village under the RP-US Bayanihan project.

Lt. Col. James McAllister, officer in command for Project Bayanihan in Sulu, said they wanted to bring peace to the village and to help the people gain "freedom from lawless and terrorist elements that would take over to suit their own selfish purposes."

Six years ago, Samak played host to Abu Sayyaf hostages from the 2000 raid on Sipadan in Malaysia.

Galib Andang, alias commander Robot, stayed in the village while negotiating for ransom.

When government forces launched a massive operation against the Abu Sayyaf, Samak became one of the major targets.

Capt. Abe Sirajan, information officer of the Army's 104th Infantry Brigade, said the village was subjected to "ground, sea and air assaults."

Darren Limpasan, Samak village chief, said they were unwilling victims of the conflict.

But he said they could not also do anything against the bandits.

Suhaina Imang, 40, said that during the military action, bombs fell on houses, classrooms were riddled with bullets, and male residents were rounded up.

She said these triggered a massive evacuation.

Limpasan estimated that more than a thousand residents sought refuge in other areas.

He said the destruction of the village was so intense that when calm returned, only the mosque, an abandoned school and a house were left standing.

Two years later, some residents started to return to the village but many of them remained pessimistic about resettling there.

"It was only two years ago that all the villagers returned. Our village was a ghost town for more than four years," Limpasan said.

Sirajan said even after their return, the villagers hardly tasted development.

By the middle of 2004, a primary school opened in Samak, day care and adult literacy programs were introduced while residents rebuilt their houses.

The barangay government, aside from assisting in the rehabilitation, also took charge of distributing toilet bowls given by the Philippine National Red Cross.

Recently, the Bayanihan project formally started. *Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

ROUNDUP

Animal ban in Digos

DIGOS CITY—The City Veterinarian's Office said it would soon start enforcing an ordinance banning animals, particularly dogs, from streets. City veterinarian Dr. Fermin Verallo said the implementation of the ordinance was hampered by the lack of a dog impounding facility in the city. Under the campaign, stray dogs not claimed by owners for a specific period will be put to sleep. Dogs with license, metal tags and those that are vaccinated are not exempted from impounding, if found roaming in public places without the owner, he said. Licensed pets not claimed in five days will be sold and the proceeds put in a trust fund, Verallo said.

Eldie Aguirre, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Motorcycle theft watch

DIGOS CITY—Police suspect that motorcycle thieves operating in Davao del Sur have ties in other areas, including Maguindanao. Provincial police chief Senior Supt. Binang Hadjiril said he had ordered a massive information gathering on car thieves in the province. Hadjiril's order came in the wake of the recent recovery of a Honda XRM motorcycle of Willie Gomez, village chief of Piapi, Padada town in Datu Paglas, Maguindanao. Motorcycles stolen from the province, according to police sources, are being registered in other Land Transportation Office branches after their serial numbers had been tampered with.

Eldie Aguirre, PDI Mindanao Bureau

German slain

ANGELES CITY—Robbers stabbed and killed a German in his house here on Good Friday. City police chief Senior Supt. Policarpio Segubre said Hans Holz, 52, was found dead by his neighbors in his house in Villasol Subdivision here at past 4 a.m. Segubre said Holz's Filipina wife, Myrna, told policemen that when she went to sleep on Thursday, her husband was watching TV. Myrna said she was awakened on Friday morning by two men tying her hands. She said the men covered her face with a shirt. Segubre said Myrna cried for help and her neighbors went to her apartment. Myrna said she only saw the bloodied body of Holz after her face was uncovered. She told policemen that their gold rings, necklaces, three cellular phones and a digital camera were missing. *Jun Malig, PDI Central Luzon Desk*

2 kids drown in resort

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Two youngsters drowned in a swimming pool in a resort in Lemery, Batangas on Saturday. Police said Howard Chavez, 13, and John Michael Vargas, 12, both of Barangay Natunuan, San Jose, Batangas, were swimming in the pool meant for adults at Doña Lorenzana Beach Resort in Barangay Nonong Casto at noon when the accident happened. Resort personnel rushed the victims to the Batangas Provincial Hospital but they were declared dead on arrival. Police were still investigating possible negligence on the part of the resort owner.

Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Narra flitches seized

LUCENA CITY—Joint operatives of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the 414th Quezon Police Mobile Group discovered an abandoned white Izusu closed van loaded with illegally cut narra flitches in Barangay Bulacao, Sampaloc, Quezon on Thursday. A police report said the vehicle, without a plate number, was found carrying at least 27 narra flitches. The seized illegal cargo and the vehicle were brought to the nearest DENR office for proper disposition.

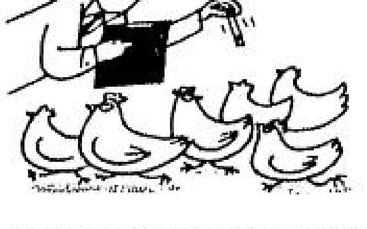
Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Puerto Princesa fire

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY—A fire burned the Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. and the Palawan Electric Cooperative billing office on Rizal Avenue here at about 4 p.m. on Good Friday. Firefighters from the 570th Composite Tactical Wing and the Army's Western Command were alerted for rescue work as the city fire department had a hard time containing the fire. The Air Transportation Office also sent in a fire truck. Initial investigation showed faulty electrical wiring might have caused the fire that a witness said started near the bank's automated teller machine.

Geraldford Ticke, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Poultry census



LEGAZPI CITY—The Bureau of Animal Industry has organized a task force to conduct a house-to-house census of poultry population in Bicol. Government veterinarians, however, protested the creation of the task force, which sought to curb the spread of bird flu. They said that aside from the additional workload it will entail, there were no funds to support it. Dr. Bernardito Abordo, regional quarantine officer, and local veterinarians agreed to tap the mayors to support the task force in terms of resources. *Edgar Alejo, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Gov asks gov't: Consult OIC on House plan to divide ARMM

COTABATO CITY—GOV. ZALDY Ampatuan of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao asked the government on Saturday to consult the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on the proposed law seeking to divide the region in two.

Ampatuan said he believed that House Bill 5369, filed by Representatives Gerry Salapuddin of Basilan, Hussin Amin of Sulu, and Hermilando Mandanas of Batangas, violated the 1996 peace agreement that the government signed with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The OIC has brokered the peace agreement.

Under the bill, the new autonomous region would be composed of Sulu, Tawi-Tawi and Basilan. This would lead to the reduction of the current ARMM's territorial jurisdiction to Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and Marawi City.

The bill also wants Central Mindanao, which rejected the expanded ARMM law, integrated into the remaining ARMM setup.

Proponents of the separate autonomous region argue that Moro inhabitants in the provinces have a distinct culture and tradition, and are "poles apart" from their Muslim counterparts in Lanao and Maguindanao.

But Ampatuan said that instead of creating peace and harmony, as the authors claimed, the measure would only divide the Moro people.

"Dividing the ARMM is counterproductive to the peace efforts of the government in Mindanao. The move caught us by surprise," Ampatuan said.

He said instead of dividing the region into two, lawmakers should think of ways to expand its present coverage area.

Ampatuan said the authors of the measure also failed to consult regional leaders and people in the affected areas.

While the House leadership appears silent on the measure, which was filed on March 15, reactions against it continue to snowball.

Abhoud Syed Lingga, director of the Institute for Bangsamoro Studies, said the two-region system for Moros had been tried and failed under the Marcos regime.

"There was the Office of the Regional Commission in Region 12 and 9. It was later changed to Lupong Tagapagpaganap ng Pook. It did not work (well)," Lingga said.

Lingga also suspected that the move was actually the government's way of dealing with the potential problem that could arise from a future deal with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

He said the creation of another Muslim autonomous region, composed of Basilan, Sulu and Tawi-Tawi, could be a way to appease the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF).

The MNLF has guerrillas in the three provinces while the MILF's main areas are in Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur and in parts of Central Mindanao.

Like Ampatuan, Lingga said a unified ARMM was better but the region should "espouse good governance based on transparency, accountability and zero tolerance to corruption."

Ghadzali Jaafar, MILF vice chair for political affairs, said the MILF position was for the expansion of the region.

"Dividing it will reduce its parts. It's better and more effective if we (Muslims) belong to a single Bangsamoro region with one voice and aspiration," Jaafar said. *Jeoffrey Maitem and Charlie Señase, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

PINOY GONZALES/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

RIVER SCENE
River Alugmawa in Lambunao, Iloilo teems with activity as residents of the village use its waters to bathe, wash clothes and picnic.

Baguio mayor not suspended, says Palace exec

BAGUIO CITY—EXECUTIVE SECretary Eduardo Ermita on Tuesday said he did not issue a document suspending Mayor Braulio Yaranon for six months for alleged abuse of authority and grave misconduct.

The Department of the Interior and Local Government recommended Yaranon's suspension for reportedly obstructing the operations of a pay parking firm here.

"There are procedures to follow … I know that case had to go to DILG. The DILG should submit its recommendation to Malacañang, and Malacañang should make a decision. As of now, no decision has been made because of a change in leadership [in the DILG]," Ermita told reporters at the Presidential Mansion.

He said Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno should review Yaranon's case.

Yaranon, a former councilor and regional trial court judge, said the contract earlier given by the city government to Jadewell Pay Parking Corp. to collect parking fees in the downtown area violated provisions prohibiting the commercialization of national streets.

One of Yaranon's campaign promises during the 2004 elections was to rid the city of Jadewell.

On his first day in office, Yaranon issued Administrative Order 001-2004, which compelled motorists to ignore the authority of Jadewell's pay parking attendants.

But Rogelio Tan, Jadewell president, filed an administrative case against Yaranon before the DILG. *Vincent Cabreza and Donna Demetillo, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

4 high school buddies hike for peace, nature

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

LUCENA CITY—THEY HAVE been buddies since high school at the Ateneo de Naga University two decades ago.

But instead of holding a Holy Week reunion in their favorite pub and reminisce those rambunctious days amid endless mugs of beer, the four embarked on a long hike from Calamba City to the city of their roots, Naga—a 450-km stretch of the Maharlika and Quirino highways—to deliver a strong message for peace and the environment.

"We believe that the rape of nature is also the cause of raging conflict in our midst. In this sense, peace and environment are two related issues," said Edgar Ramores, spokesperson of the group.

"The rape of nature and our natural resources is not only the cause of man-made calamities that have ravaged us but also the cause of poverty, dislocation and other social ills," he said in an e-mailed statement to the INQUIRER.

"To work, therefore, for peace is to see that justice is done to our environment, to our nature."

The highway trekkers and members of Ateneo de Naga's High School Class 1987 are Ramores, who has a steel fabrication and aluminum glass business; Michael Cuesta, a researcher at the Social Science Research Center-Ateneo de Naga; Al Calara, a banker; and Quintin Barachina, a telephone company employee.

Calara and Barachina are members of the United Trekkers Club.

Ramores and Cuesta are based in Naga, while the other two have settled in Manila.

"We are brothers in several organizations. *Magkukumpare*. We are one in many things, including the environment and social issues," Ramores described the group.

Preparation

They started preparing for the hike only in February, exchanging information through the Internet and mobile phone text messages. They walked 3-5 km a day, while two of them had climbed two mountains in Cavite.

"The thought of just basking in the friendship helped us prepare mentally," Ramores said.

At first, the group planned to start their adventure at the Luneta a week earlier, but it decided to take off instead in Calamba. Ramores and Cuesta, both coming from Naga, would meet their two Manila-based friends there.

On April 8, the group began to hit the road at Turbina at 4 a.m. "There was no departure ritual, just a general orientation of do's and don'ts. No send-off party. No back-up vehicles. But we did have a monitoring team checking on us at a particular time," Ramores said.

Sporting colorful gears, jungle hats and shades, the hikers took the left side of the road for safety. In their backpacks were mist spray, sun blocks, two-way radios, mobile phones, digital still and video cameras, dry-fit shirts, and a map.

Their shirts read: "When it rains, our tears pour. Save our forests."

Quitting

The punishing task was expected to bring great discomfort.

"Aching toes, soles, feet, thighs, legs, backs, shoulders; source of water, and the heat! Too much heat!" Ramores said in an e-mail.

A day after embarking on the journey along asphalt and concrete roads, where speeding vehicles posed real danger, two of them thought of quitting.

"It was drowned out by the outpour of support. We received text messages and phone calls daily from friends, family, and people we don't know personally—all expressing support in our walk. It was very inspiring," said Ramores.

"There was no backing out. We already made it this far," he said as the group rested the night in Gumaca town in Quezon.

Ritual

Every morning, they woke up early and took a quick bath.

"We teased each other and traded jokes. We reviewed and revised plan, stops and maps," Ramores said.

"We walked in buddies. We did a lot of pictorial. We smelled the flowers, sang in a makeshift videoke bar, exchanged banter or struck a conversation with roadside storekeepers and played with grass."

THREE of the buddies take a rest from their cycling mission for peace. They took the long way by road from Calamba City to their native Naga for a journey that took all of 450 km.

DELFIN T. MALLARI JR./PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Roadside eateries offered heavy meals that included rice, vegetables and fish.

"We had eaten and tasted almost all fruits we saw on the way—*pakwan* (watermelon), *buko* (coconut), apple, *caimito* (star apple), melon, banana, mango, Ponkan oranges," Ramores said.

"We started our walk before sunrise, and rested before sunset (for security reasons). We didn't encounter rain. But our decision was to walk, come rain or shine," he said.

In Lucena City and Gumaca, the group rested in a hotel. In Tagkawayan and Sipocot, friends offered shelter for the night.

Sponsors

Serving as sponsors of the Holy Week trek were friends, mountaineers, the Kaiba News and Features, and De Naga Pawnshop.

Ramores said he had thought of his family with every step. To kill boredom, he picked up assorted items along the route—battered coins, packs of cigarettes, a hat, stainless screw knot and marbles.

"After we reach the finish line, I want to go home, kiss my wife and children, and eat lots of fruits and fish. We will have a reunion with other friends later," he said.

Finally, they arrived in Naga at around 7 p.m. on Wednesday and were welcomed by families and friends.

"Our firm belief in our advocacies is our motivation. We can do something as grueling for what we believe in. We want to encourage/challenge others to do something in their own ways," Ramores stressed.

Social message

In a statement, they explained that as they strived hard to reach their goal, they also intended to draw inspiration from their actual encounters with different places and people as subjects of future literary pieces.

Good literary work develops through time and should have a real brush with reality in so far as one intends it to be realistic and scientific, Ramores said.

"The walk has in mind a compilation of literary works as output. All forms may be used, such as poem, essay, short story (including children's), song, *tigsik* and novel," Cuesta said, adding:

"Although literary work particularly refers to written form, we do not exclude other artistic and cultural expressions such as painting, photography, and the like."

Barachina explained that they were not fanatic writers.

"We are not romancing the road. We would walk just enough to be inspired and we would leave half of our energy to reflect, discuss and write," he said. "During the day, we were like laboratory scientists observing our specimens—experimenting—and come night time, we would write our observation report."

"We are not professional writers, just walkers trying to write some sense—some social sense," Ramores said.

Road crashes, killings break Lent silence

LUCENA CITY—FIVE PERSONS were killed in separate accidents in Quezon province on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

On Maundy Thursday, a bus collided with a motorcycle in Barangay Talisay, Tiaong.

Police said Tranquilino Moreno, the motorcycle rider, of San Dionisio, Parañaque, died on the spot.

Another motorcycle passenger, Marlon Galac, of Barangay Tagbakin, Tiaong, died at the MMG Hospital in Lucena City.

Jeric Yumol, also a motorcycle passenger, suffered severe injuries and was recuperating at the Mt. Carmel Hospital, also in Lucena.

Bus driver Willy Acunis was detained at the municipal jail.

Also on Thursday, another bus hit a pedestrian along the Maharlika Highway in Barangay Villa Arcaya, Gumaca town.

Police said Dante B. Alvino, 33, of Barangay Camuhaguin, Gumaca, was bumped by a Philtranco bus being driven by a certain Lutargo B. Dayola.

On Good Friday, two persons were killed in separate attacks.

In Sariaya town, police said suspect Ariel Jader, a businessman, of Barangay Mamala, phoned his mother-in-law, Edita Briones, in the nearby village of Pili early Friday and informed her that he had killed her daughter's paramour.

Policemen found the body of the victim, identified as a certain Nilo Javier, of Barangay Sampaloc II, under a bed in the children's room.

They said people in the neighborhood heard successive gunshots before midnight from the house of the suspect.

The suspect and his wife fled and are now being hunted. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Siquijor health service battles with fund, equipment lack

By Alex Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau

SIQUIJOR, SIQUIJOR—IT WAS one hot Saturday morning and Arwel Padayhag, 31, was looking forward to a day with friends in the Salagdoong Beach in Maria, Siquijor.

He was driving his motorcycle to the beach when he crashed in a dirt road.

Friends rushed him to the premier health care facility in the province—the Siquijor Provincial Hospital in Siquijor town. But instead of treating him, hospital personnel told him to take the earliest boat for Dumaguete at once. The reason: the hospital couldn't get his X-ray.

"We ran out of developer and fixer for our X-ray film," the X-ray technician told Arwel.

A gallon of developer and fixer costs about P2,000 and can be used to develop up to 300 X-ray films. No store sells those items in Siquijor.

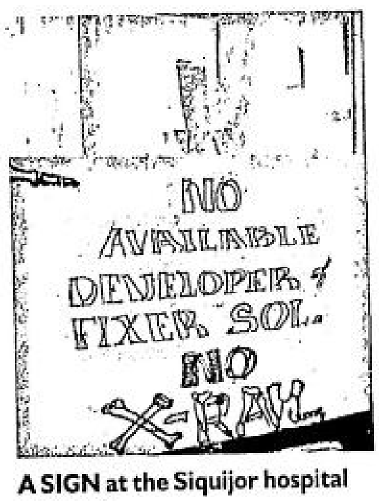
"We usually order enough supplies to last us one quarter, but this time, our supplies did not arrive on time," the technician said.

This was not the first time patients were turned away at the hospital for a seemingly minor injury.

"There are times when we run out of medicine, oxygen and other supplies, said Dr. Redempta Cortes, provincial health officer 1.

There is no shortage of doctors at the hospital, thanks to a scheme whereby government doctors are allowed to do a full month's work in 15 days, giving them time to also work in other hospitals in Dumaguete, Cebu or Bohol for the next 15 days.

On a scale of 10, Cortes said the state of Siquijor province's health services could only be a 5 or 6 "because we lack supplies and medicines."



A SIGN at the Siquijor hospital says it all.

THE SIQUIJOR hospital

PHOTOS BY ALEX PAL/PDI VISAYAS BUREAU

Medical missions

Sometimes, some civic clubs and foreign volunteers come to fill the need. Recently, nearly 200 doctors, dentists, nurses, medical technologists, lawyers, and members of nine Rotary Clubs in Negros Oriental and Siquijor, came for a medical, dental and legal mission.

SPECIAL REPORT

Len Magno, Rotary Club district governor in Central and Eastern Visayas and the eastern, southern and central provinces of Mindanao, described the medical mission as a historic activity for the club.

"This took nine months in the making. We started planning this activity last June," said Youman Uymatiao, assistant Rotary governor for Zone 3D.

Among those who waited in line was Generosa General. For a 73-year-old woman who had always pulled her teeth during her younger years, it seemed unusual to queue for dental services.

'Mananambals'

Many Siquijodnons, especially those of Generosa's generation, either try to treat themselves or patronize faith healers which this island-province is known for apart from its white-sand beaches.

"Many patients often resort to alternative forms of treatment because that is all they can afford. Services at the hospital may be free, but not the medicine," explained Dr. Avelex Amor, one of the hospital's doctors.

Dr. Cortes agreed with that observation. "We cannot do away with *mananambal* (faith healers) in Siquijor because many people run to them first. But if the *mananambal* don't succeed, the patient comes to us," she said.

Sometimes, there are patients who seek admission in the hospital accompanied by a faith healer. "We don't stop the patients from bringing their personal faith healers, for as long as they don't interfere with the treatment at the hospital," said a nurse.

While many of Siquijor's faith healers have gained not just local acclaim and get their own share of visitors, especially during Holy Week, many Siquijodnons of the younger generation have started to prefer professional medical treatment.

Young mothers now bring their sick children to the hospital at the first sign of illness, especially after the deadly dengue fever outbreak last year, which afflicted more than a hundred people and claimed five lives.

Priority

Some local government units are also making health a priority of their administration.

Mayor Rebecca Padayhag, of the town of Maria, not only showed up for the medical mission—the only local chief executive to do so—but also brought along food for the medical mission volunteers. She also brought along most of her barangay captains, the entire staff of the municipal health office and three of her councilors.

Padayhag ensured that her constituents get health services from the government. "We have appropriated the biggest sum of money from the 20 percent development fund—P480,000—for health."

That amount might not sound big for a town of some 10,000 inhabitants but that is already a lot of money for this fifth class municipality.

"The health budget still leaves a lot to be desired but this is already a great improvement over the budget of previous years," said Maria municipal health officer Archibald Inso.

But he said he still wishes the town had money to buy equipment such as a platelet separator that could treat dengue patients on the island instead of in Dumaguete City.

Inso said he welcomes medical missions such as this one, because they give their town's residents access to medical care.

Hopeful

Not all local government units are giving the same priority to health.

"We are not immediately given supplies. They take so long to arrive," a nurse at the Siquijor Provincial Hospital said.

She said the hospital is at the mercy of the provincial capitol that buys the hospital's needs. An example, she said, was a request for emergency purchase of medicines made last September. The medicines were bid out only last February.

Recently, Marcelo Fua Jr., a supplier of medical equipment and the brother of Siquijor Gov. Orlando Fua Sr., broke his leg in a motorcycle accident. He went to the provincial hospital, but doctors could not do anything but immobilize his leg, due to the lack of X-ray facilities.

Hopes now run high at the provincial hospital that Fua's case would serve as a wake-up call and help improve the province's health care system.

LIVING IN THE 'RING OF FIRE'

Gov't orders DENR to prepare disaster map

LIVING ON THE PACIFIC "RING OF FIRE," A string of volcanic islands on the western edge of the world's largest ocean, is forcing Filipinos to painfully come to terms with the accident of geography that is their country.

Back in February, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the environment and natural resources department to complete a P90 million geohazard mapping program covering at least half the towns of the country within three years.

The move followed the collapse of a mountain side that buried more than a thousand people in Southern Leyte that month.

Located on what is known as the Philippine fault, the island is the juncture of two earth plates—one pushing the island northwest toward China and the eastern section slipping the other way toward Indonesia—making Leyte one of the most dangerous places to live in the Philippines.

The project would identify potential threats from landslides and earthquakes, floods, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, liquefaction and other natural hazards that according to official data kill about 500 Filipinos every year.

"We cannot prevent the event itself, it's a natural thing. But the impact can somehow be lessened by making sure that people are aware, and hopefully they are more vigilant," said Antonio Apostol, head of the geological survey division of the government's Mines and Geosciences Bureau that is in charge of the project.

The seismology office says an average of five earthquakes, caused mostly by the tectonic plate movements, rocks the Philippines every single day, though most are barely perceptible.

22 active volcanoes

Some quakes are caused by the country's 22 active volcanoes. The last major eruption, Pinatubo in Zambales in 1991, altered the global climate for years afterward as millions of tons of sulfur dioxide shot into the stratosphere blocked sunlight and cooled the entire Earth by up to 0.6 degrees Celsius.

"We're still lucky that we are not being hit in places where it would really hurt," said Apostol, who noted that many of the Philippines' major population centers are built among major rivers and are prone to flooding.

'La Niña' effect

Ms Arroyo has warned that the danger from natural calamities will be magnified this year due to the 'La Niña' phenomenon.

Under La Niña, the sea-surface temperature in the central and eastern tropical Pacific falls below normal, typically bringing above-average rainfall to the Philippines as well as Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia.

The government weather office says this could increase the number of storms and typhoons that strike the northern two-thirds of the country every year, which average about 19. It said the entire eastern seaboard would be at risk.

The Leyte landslide "is likely not the last that will happen during the year, considering the La Niña period. So we need to educate the people on the warning systems," said weather bureau chief Graciano Yumul.

Pre-existing dangers

The risk compounded pre-existing dangers across the Philippines, he said.

"There are very few areas in the country that can really be called ideal—where there would be no type of geohazard occurring. I would say just 10 percent," he said.

"In the Philippine fault, some sections are moving at around 2.5 centimeters (one inch) a year. That's very fast compared to other areas, where the movement would be measured in the order of millimeters over several hundred years." A four-member field survey team documenting anecdotal histories of past disasters takes at least two months to translate the data into a 50,000:1 scale map for a single 48,000-hectare quadrant, the average size of a town.

The government has to make 900 such maps to cover the entire country, after which all the danger zones would have to be scaled down to 10,000:1 maps to identify possible relocation sites at village level, Apostol said.

Japan, which is in a similar geological predicament, donated P4-million worth of geohazard mapping equipment to Manila earlier this month.

The project was launched way back in 1999, in the immediate aftermath of a sudden landslip that devastated a low-cost development of 379 hilltop row houses in Antipolo, Rizal, that killed 32 people and left dozens others injured.

A government report faulted "error in judgment" by the developers, who were subsequently sued by the survivors. AFP

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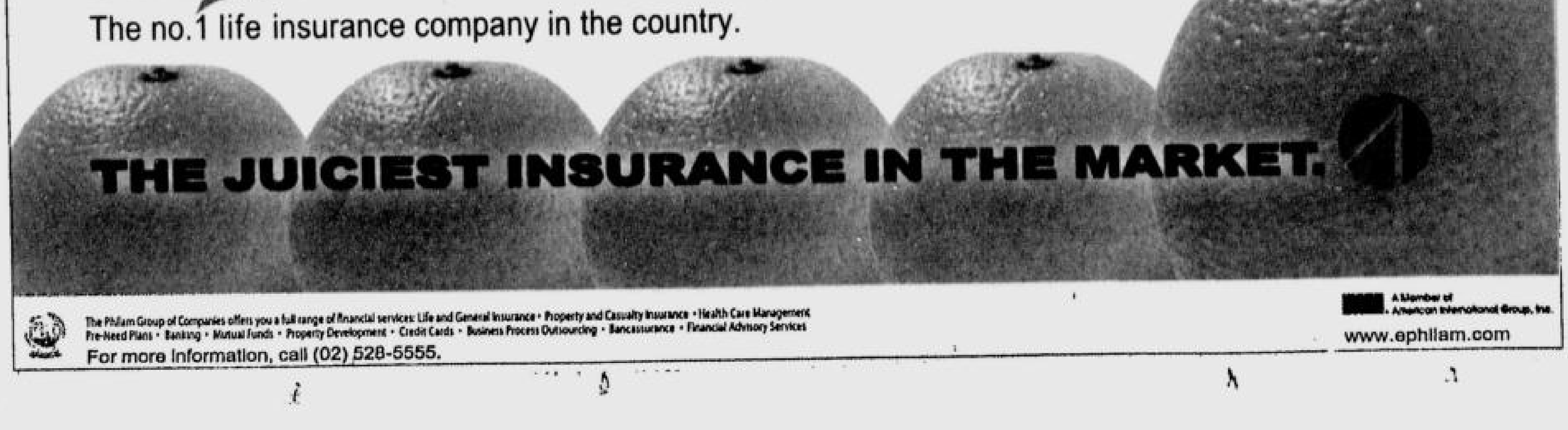
*Source: BusinessWorld Top 1000 Corporations in the Philippines 2005 (based on 2004 performance)



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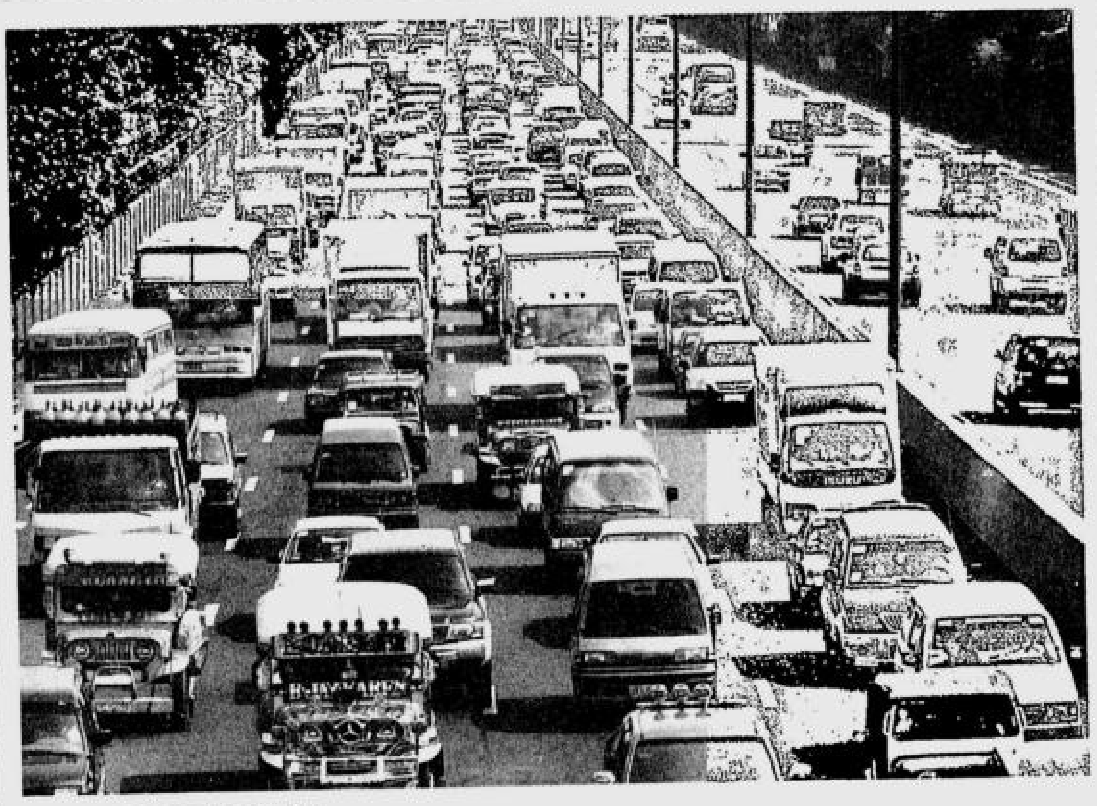
WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Marikina bans internet cafe porn sites** /A20
- **NCRPO cites 51% decrease in crimes during Holy Week** /A20
- **Fire hits 3 Metro cities** /A20

Doc files P10-M libel suit vs patient



HOMEWARD-BOUND
Motorists are caught in a gridlock along the North Luzon Expressway on their way back to the metropolis after the four-day Holy Week break. RAFFY LERMA

TV interviews caused huge losses, ruined reputation, says complaint

By DJ Yap

A COSMETIC DOCTOR, WHOSE CLIENTS include well-known entertainment personalities, has filed a P10-million libel suit against a patient who accused his clinic staff of botching a hair removal procedure that allegedly left burn marks in her armpits and legs.

DR. Joel Mendez

Dr. Joel Mendez charged Regina Laud, a White Plains (Quezon City) resident, with besmirching his reputation and causing him severe business losses when she appeared on television to talk about her alleged misfortune at the Body and Face by Mendez clinic. As a result of the accusations, the clinic is "now on the verge of collapse," according to Mendez. In a complaint filed in the Quezon City prosecutor's office, Mendez accused Laud of maliciously describing him as "incompetent" and telling the public he had tried to bribe her to keep quiet. Mendez cited Laud's appearances on ABS-CBN programs "TV Patrol" and "Homeboy" on Nov. 15 and Dec. 2, 2005, respectively, in which she complained about the "doctor's lack of training" and the "faulty machine" in his clinic.

Laud added that the operation, which occurred on Oct. 6, 2005, resulted in first-degree burns on her armpits and second-degree burns on her legs.

She also said the clinic had no first aid kit, and that the staff had to buy painkillers to alleviate the pain she felt after the procedure. The doctor's lawyers tried to talk to her lawyer about an offer of P700,000 to "settle" the case, she added. Mendez said Laud made it appear that he had performed the operation when it was another doctor who had done so.

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NCRPO cites 51% decrease in Metro crimes

By Jocelyn R. Uy

WHERE WERE THE BAD GUYS? The National Capital Region Police Office reported yesterday that crimes in the metropolis went down by 51 percent during Holy Week.

"The Holy Week was very peaceful. For the past two weeks of April, we recorded a decrease in crimes compared to the last two weeks of March," Senior Supt. Agrimero Cruz Jr, chief of the NCRPO Community Relations Department, told the INQUIRER.

He attributed the decrease to the exodus of thousands of Metro Manila residents from the city to observe the Holy Week in their provinces.

Cruz added that the public's cooperation with the police also helped prevent untoward incidents during the four-day break.

He also thanked media for "persistently making advisories to remind the people of their personal security measures."

The stringent measures carried out by the more than 1,000 policemen who were deployed throughout the metropolis also ensured peace and order and prevented terrorist elements from striking during Holy Week, Cruz added.

Based on police reports, from April 1 to 14, there were 419 crimes recorded compared to the 864 incidents from March 16 to 30, or a decrease of 51 percent.

"There was a decrease particularly in the number of street crimes such as theft and physical injuries," Cruz said.

The NCRPO recorded a total of 45 theft cases in Metro Manila during the same period, which was 70 percent lower compared to last month's 151 incidents. Physical injuries went down by 62 percent; rape, 57 percent; robbery, 52 percent and theft, 70 percent.

On the other hand, homicide incidents increased by 77 percent from 18 cases last month, to 32 during the first half of April.

Not on hold

However, car thieves did not lie low during the period. The NCRPO reported that at least 19 vehicles, 13 of them motorcycles, were stolen. Six cars were stolen while parked while two were forcibly taken from their owners.

The police also arrested at least 62 suspected drug users and 13 others for illegal gambling.

For the same period, the Manila Police District registered the highest number of index crimes or heinous crimes with 68 cases, followed by the Southern Police District with 66 incidents; Northern Police District, 45; Quezon City Police District, 30 and Eastern Police District, 27.

IDA San Ramon, a teacher at the Sta. Mesa Integrated School, looks at the remains of her house from across the street on Agham Road, Quezon City, after a fire left her and several families homeless. RAFFY LERMA

Fires hit 3 cities in Metro; no one hurt

By Tarra V. Quismundo, Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THREE FIRES BROKE OUT IN THE metropolis yesterday, destroying over P2 million worth of property but causing no deaths or injuries.

First to be hit was the OMV 3 Building in Makati City, a warehouse for plastic products owned by Vassar Industries.

Arson investigators said the fire started at the second floor of the building located in a compound on Malugay Street, San Antonio Village at half past midnight.

"There was a stockpile of plastic cups and styrofoam at the second floor, and these were highly combustible so the fire quickly spread," said SFO1 Francisco Sergio, case investigator.

Sergio said security guard Joselito Decipolo was making a routine inspection of the building when he noticed smoke coming from the upper floor. The warehouse was empty as the employees had already gone home.

"We could not say what caused the fire yet because there could be many factors. That is still under investigation," Sergio said.

A total of 48 fire trucks rushed to the scene to put out the fire which destroyed around P2 million worth of property. It was declared under control at 2:40 a.m.

More than seven hours later, a fire consumed a residential compound on Agham Road cor. Quezon Avenue in Quezon City, leaving dozens homeless.

The blaze destroyed at least nine apartments made of concrete and light materials, fire officials said. The fire of unknown origin was put out 40 minutes after it broke out at 9:20 a.m.

In Mandaluyong City, a fire that started at about 1:30 p.m. razed a two-story house on Coronado Street, Barangay Hulo. Witnesses said an unattended television set, which exploded because of overheating, could have caused the blaze. The fire quickly spread to the other rooms inside the five-door apartment row. *With DJ Yap and Melissa de Quiros, trainee*

Cops gird for face-off with mock protesters

MANILA policemen practice their crowd management moves at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park in preparation for the forthcoming National Capital Region Police Office crowd management competition. RYAN LIM

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE MEMBERS OF THE MANILA POLICE District's Civil Disturbance Management unit are preparing for a Metro-wide competition at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park on Sunday.

Senior Supt. Danilo Abarzosa, chief of the MPD Operations Division, said the CDM units of the MPD, and that of the four other police districts—the Southern Police District, Eastern Police District, Northern Police District, and Quezon City Police District—will participate in the competition.

Abarzosa said the MPD's CDM team, composed of roughly 120 members, have been practicing at the grandstand since April 3.

"The competition, a project of National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) Director Vidal Querol, will test the units' capability and expertise in rally management," he added.

The MPD official explained the NCRPO will put the CDM the units through various formations and exercises to test their skill in dealing with mobs and protesters.

"The NCRPO officials will assess how the units negotiate with the leaders of the rally to avoid confrontation," Abarzosa said.

He added, "When negotiations fail, the judges would check how the police avoid using excessive force when dealing with the protesters."

The Manila police's CDM is quite used to dealing with protesters because of the frequency of rallies occurring at the Chino Roces bridge which is near Malacañang Palace.

Marikina bans net cafe porn sites

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

A NEW ORDINANCE HAS BEEN APPROVED in Marikina prohibiting customers from surfing pornographic websites in internet cafes in the city.

It also orders shop owners to install software to filter all pornographic websites. Customers caught accessing these sites will be slapped with fines.

The Marikina City Council approved last week the ordinance regulating the establishment and operation of internet and computer shops in the city. It is set to take effect next month.

The ordinance also listed prohibited activities, such as banning customers from performing sexual acts in front of web cameras or camera-equipped phones, surfing pornographic websites, transmitting images or videos of sexual acts and even placing bets on on-line gaming.

Minors who want to surf the web will have to present their School IDs and class schedule as certified by the School Registrar. They will not be allowed entry into the premises, especially when they are in uniform and during school hours, unless they will conduct research for school projects.

Shop owners are mandated to display a poster containing the warning: "Internet Pornography and On-line Gambling Are Prohibited." owners who violate the ordinance will be slapped with a fine of up to P5,000 with revocation of license on the third offense. Customers who violate the ordinance will face a fine of P3,000. Minors, on the other hand, will have to pay a P1,000 fine.

SISTERHOOD PACT
Mayor Jaime R. Fresnedi (center) and Romanian Ambassador Radu Homescu Romania discuss the upcoming signing of an agreement which would make Romania's Pitesti Muntinlupa's sister city.

Might as well scrap the death penalty

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO'S order commuting the sentences of death convicts to life imprisonment has stirred a hornet's nest.

Many citizens are disappointed by the President's order, but a big number probably also backs her up.

The decision, made to coincide with Easter, was apparently meant to please the local Catholic Church whose bishops have been breathing down her neck.

We should not begrudge Ms Arroyo for trying to kowtow to the bishops, being a devout Catholic herself, but she should have thought long and hard about the consequence of her decision.

A true leader always thinks of the general welfare, and not the pleasure of a particular group of people.

She must remember that the bishops are not the Catholic Church, and that many Catholics disagree with their church's stand on capital punishment.

If things were put to a vote, the majority of the citizenry would choose capital punishment for heinous crimes such as murder, kidnapping, drug trafficking and rape.

Besides, if the President's decision is to spare death row convicts, we might as well scrap the law that restored capital punishment.

If that's the case, then let's turn over hardened criminals to the care of the Catholic Church, which forgives grievous sins by a mere act of contrition.

* * *

The fight against crime should be relentless and hard.

Would-be criminals should be shown that society would punish them according to the gravity of their offense.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is the guiding principle in dealing with persons who have no remorse in harming others.

If the government becomes wishy-washy in dealing with criminals, then it should expect anarchy.

* * *

During the early days of President Marcos' martial law regime, a Chinese drug trafficker named Lim Seng was executed by firing squad at Fort Bonifacio. The execution was witnessed by many people.

For many years after that dramatic execution, the Philippines became virtually a drug-free society. The incidence of other crimes went down considerably.

Fear of proportionate punishment was driven into the psyche of criminals.

* * *

CEBU CITY has become a city friendly to walkers. People can now walk the streets without fear of being robbed or stabbed especially at night.

The Queen City of the South was a dangerous place to live in a year or so ago. Criminals were having a heyday preying on hapless citizens. Until the vigilantes came.

More than 100 pickpockets, robbers, drug pushers and thrill-killers have been executed by unidentified vigilantes.

Of course, the citizens know who the vigilantes are, but they're not complaining. Instead, they cry for more blood of criminals to cleanse their city.

Apparently, Cebu's vigilantes are copying from their counterparts in Davao City where they are called DDS or Davao Death Squad.

Many Davao City residents jokingly replace the first three words with a famous name. But the joke is said with a sound of gratitude to it.

* * *

I WAS in Cebu City during the Holy Week. That's how I came to learn about how many citizens regard the nemesis of criminals.

But how I miss those days when Cebuano drivers were disciplined!

Today, practically nobody obeys traffic rules. Public utility vehicles pick up passengers in the middle of the streets, drivers disregard the red light and pedestrians cross no-crossing streets.

I suggest the city reemploy Rogelio "Jingjing" Osmeña as the city's traffic czar. Jingjing brought order to the streets of Cebu City years ago.

METROBRIEFS

Fire truck hits motorbikes

A FIRE truck with defective brakes crashed into two motorcycles parked near the Malabon City police headquarters on F. Sevilla Street at around noon yesterday. The motorcycles belonged to two policemen—PO2 George de la Cruz and PO3 Joel Fernandez. Vicente Villamar, the driver of the fire truck said he was maneuvering the truck out of the parking area when the brakes failed. He promised to shoulder the expenses for the motorcycles' repair. De la Cruz said he was upset at first when he learned about the incident. "I use my motorcycle for work. They will just have to fix it and restore it to its former condition. Anyway, it was an accident, it was no deliberate," he told the INQUIRER. Fernandez, on the other hand, refused to comment. *Nancy C. Carvajal*

Solon's request granted

ANAKPAWIS Rep. Crispin Beltran, who has been detained for over a month, scored a legal victory yesterday after Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 137 Judge Jenny Lind Aldecoa-Delorino approved his motion to undergo a medical check-up in a hospital equipped to attend to his needs. "The judge resolved to grant the motion for him to undergo a thorough check-up at his own expense. But before he can be transferred, we will have to submit a written manifestation detailing where he would be transferred and what kind of treatment he would undergo," said Beltran's lawyer Amylyn Sato. The solon, who is detained on rebellion charges at the Philippine National Police General Hospital in Camp Crame, Quezon City, asked the court to let him undergo a check-up for health reasons. Beltran suffered a mild stroke last year. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

Car thieves strike

TWO vehicles were lost to car thieves over the weekend in Pasay City, police said. Five armed thieves, one of them a woman, forcibly took businesswoman Catalina Bautista's Ford Escape with plate number ZAV-487 at about 11:45 p.m. Saturday on Cultural Center of the Philippines grounds, authorities said. The victim, a resident of Dasmariñas, Cavite, stopped her car when she was flagged down by the woman, whom she thought she knew. When she opened her window, four men ordered her to get out of her vehicle at gunpoint before boarding it and driving away. On Monday night, Robert Tiocson lost his silver Toyota Vios with plate number ZBH-570 to car thieves while attending Mass at the Redemptorist Church in Baclaran with his family. SP04 Arnulfo Hanaban of the Pasay City anti-car theft unit said Tiocson had parked his car near a fast food restaurant facing Roxas Boulevard. When he returned, the car was gone. *Jocelyn R. Uy*

Earth Day show

THE WACKY group, Bagong Dugo, will celebrate Earth Day by staging a show today dubbed "Baligtaran (Mga Bagay na Dapat Ninyong Malaman tungkol sa Kamunduhan)" in the Conspiracy Garden Café at 59 Visayas Ave., Quezon City at 9 p.m. Using popular tunes and comic sketches, Bagong Dugo will also tackle reproductive health, Charter change and fair trade advocacy, among other issues. The group is composed of journalists Joel Saracho and Ferdie Aboga, actor Jojit Lorenzo, voice talent Alexx Agcaoili, and musical director Kiko Ortega. Susan Fernandez joins Bagong Dugo in a funny rendition of Lovin' You and The Prayer. Impersonator Willie Nepomuceno is expected to make a surprise appearance.

Nepal protests: Beginning of end for the king?

By Somini Sengupta

NEW DELHI—WITH ALL THE howls of "Burn the crown" during the 12 days of pro-democracy protests in Nepal, the most obvious question is also the most ominous: Where will this all lead?

Will politicians, surprised by the intensity of the demonstrations, be able to keep control of popular outrage or corral the ambitions of the Maoist rebel leaders who have given their blessings to the prodemocracy movement?

Will the palace unleash the Royal Nepalese Army against the protesters—and will soldiers obey?

Most significant for the long run, will Nepal's deepening political crisis spell the end of the monarchy in the world's only Hindu kingdom, or will King Gyanendra manage to save his crown?

This is "the beginning of the end," C.K. Lal, a columnist for The Nepali Times, said in an interview. He predicted further "suppression by the regime," followed by bigger and more intense street protests.

Whatever the future holds, the protests that began on April 6, marking the anniversary of the democracy movement that ushered in parliamentary rule in 1990, testify to a tectonic shift under way in Nepal's politics.

First, if many ordinary Nepalese were once willing to give their king a chance to bring peace and stability to a country racked by a Maoist rebellion, they seem to have lost their patience.

Second, fueled by the ballooning number of young people in the country, what was once an untouchable reverence for the monarchy seems to have vanished like clouds crossing the mountains.

Third, and most important, if protest calls once brought out political party workers in certain politically active towns, this round of demonstrations has pricked a sense of outrage among commoners, including those who once said they were hardly interested in or downright disgusted by politicians.

Ordinary Nepalese—lawyers one day, a group of the disabled another day—have flooded the streets and courted police beatings for nearly two weeks. Government workers have staged work stoppages. Donations have been collected to treat the hundreds of protesters injured by the police.

"People are realizing that the king will not deliver until we take to the streets," said Pramod Poudel, 30, a handicrafts exporter who once believed that Gyanendra's royal takeover in February 2005 could bring peace and stability.

Until last week, Poudel had never considered it necessary to join a political protest. "Now, it's high time for people like myself," he said. *NYT*

शाही शत्ता मुर्दाबाद !
लोकतन्त्र जिन्दाबाद !!
विरोधी श्रम अध्यादेश खारेज गर।
श्रमिक एकता जिन्दाबाद
ट्रेड युनियन
आधिकारिक ट्रेड युनियन
दि एभरेष्ट होटल

HOTEL employees protest in solidarity with the ongoing democratic movement which has brought Nepal to a standstill. REUTERS

Aussies' republican hopes rise as queen turns 80

SYDNEY—RESPECT FOR Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is credited with stifling the republican movement in Australia, but it is expected to gain new momentum if her son Prince Charles takes the throne.

During her last visit in March, hundreds of flag-waving Australians lined the streets of Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne to welcome the woman who has reigned over this former colony for more than 50 years.

In contrast, the visit of her son and heir Charles a year earlier was largely ignored by the public and served only to reignite debate about whether the former penal outpost should break with Britain and become a republic.

As the queen prepares to celebrate her 80th birthday on Friday, republicans are again pushing for a reappraisal of the country's constitutional monarchy in light of the so-called "Charles factor."

Even conservative Prime Minister John Howard, himself a staunch monarchist, has indicated that the British royal family may not rule in Australia beyond the reign of the widely respected Elizabeth II.

"I don't believe Australia will become a republic while the queen is on the throne, beyond that I don't know," Howard told British television last month.

Ted O'Brien, the chairman of the Australian Republican Movement, is more blunt.

"The Australian people just aren't comfortable with Charles," he told AFP.

"The everyday Australian would not accept a King Charles or a Queen Camilla."

O'Brien said the queen becoming an octogenarian had brought the republican debate back into the national consciousness, after the country held a failed referendum on the issue in 1999.

"What it really comes down to is Charles, who is an Englishman born and bred in London—is he an appropriate person to lead the Australian nation?" he asked.

O'Brien's view is supported to some extent by polling which has shown steadily increasing support for the creation of a republic in recent years.

One poll, conducted by Roy Morgan in February 2005, found that support for a republic would rise to 61 percent if the Prince of Wales were to be crowned king.

But Prof. David Flint, convenor of Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy, believes Charles would eventually be accepted as king.

He says the biggest problem facing Charles, now 57, is that he will be elderly by the time he assumes the throne.

"The Queen, as far as one can tell, will be there for a long time. She is not going to abdicate. She regards it as her duty to stay in office. She is just as likely to live as long as her mother (who lived to 101)," Flint told AFP.

"The problem for Charles will be he will most likely be quite elderly. He will come as an older man and his reign will probably be short."

Flint said the queen's eldest son had endured years of bad press—much of it related to the breakdown of his marriage to the late Princess of Wales, Diana—which had overshadowed the major contributions he has made elsewhere.

"Charles will mellow as Prince of Wales and I think he will be accepted as an appropriate person to be king," he said.

"Canada, Australia and New Zealand will happily take Charles if he does succeed the queen."

But Australia is not the only former colony where the rights of the British monarchy rankle.

More than a decade ago, New Zealand's then Prime Minister Jim Bolger ignited a debate on whether his country should sever its links with the British crown by nailing his colors to the republican mast. *AFP*

BRITAIN'S Queen Elizabeth II receiving flowers from waiting schoolchildren waving national flags after Commonwealth Day services in Sydney in March 13 photo. AFP

New Medicaid rules to hurt immigrants

WASHINGTON—MORE THAN 50 MILLION Medicaid recipients will soon have to produce birth certificates, passports or other documents to prove that they are US citizens, and everyone who applies for coverage after June 30 will have to show similar documents under a new federal law.

The requirement is meant to stop the "theft of Medicaid benefits by illegal aliens," said Rep. Charlie Norwood, R-Ga., a principal author of the provision, which was signed into law by President Bush on Feb. 8.

State officials worry that many elderly people, blacks, American Indians and other poor people will be unable to produce the documents needed to prove citizenship. In addition, hospital executives said they were concerned that the law could increase their costs, by reducing the number of patients with insurance.

The requirement takes effect on July 1. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that it will save the federal government $220 million over five years and $735 million over 10 years.

The CBO expects that 35,000 people will lose coverage by 2015. Most of them will be illegal immigrants, it said, but some will be citizens unable to produce the necessary documents. Some Medicaid experts put the numbers much higher, saying that millions of citizens could find their health benefits in jeopardy.

State officials are trying to figure out how to comply. Many said the federal requirement would result in denying benefits to some poor people who were entitled to Medicaid but could not find the necessary documents.

"This provision is misguided and will serve as a barrier to health care for otherwise eligible United States citizens," said Gov. Chris Gregoire of Washington.

Gregoire said the provision would cause hardship for many older African-Americans who never received birth certificates and for homeless people who did not have ready access to family records.

Hospitals and nursing homes are concerned. "The new requirement will result in fewer people being eligible for Medicaid or enrolling in the program, and that means more uninsured people," said Lynne P. Fagnani, senior vice president of the National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems. "They still need care, but are more likely to wait until their condition becomes more severe and more costly to treat."

The new requirement will come as a surprise to most Medicaid recipients. The law said they should be informed "as soon as practicable" after Feb. 8. But the education campaign has yet to begin. *NYT*

Medical milestone: Those unwieldy casts cast off

By Lindsey Tanner

CHICAGO—THE BLACK VELCRO BANDAGE strapped on 3-year-old Ben Crotty's left arm looks like a Rollerblader's wrist guard, but it's really a mini medical milestone.

It's today's answer to the cast.

Once almost a childhood rite of passage, plaster or fiberglass casts were the method of choice for fixing broken bones. But now, doctors around the world are increasingly shunning cumbersome casts in favor of more cutting-edge options for both kids and adults: splints, special boots, metal plates, rods and screws.

For Ben Crotty's broken wrist, it was a removable splint.

The trend is most common among adults, who often develop swelling and pain and sometimes permanent stiffness. "We often refer to this as 'cast disease.' I say, 'Good riddance!'" said Dr. John Fernandez, an orthopedic surgeon at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago.

Support for the modern technique on kids was bolstered by a Canadian study last month in the journal Pediatrics. It showed that in children aged 6 to 15 with wrist fractures like Ben's, those who wore removable splints for three weeks had better physical function during treatment and afterward than those treated with plaster casts.

The splinted kids also escaped cast-related problems: Four youngsters sought emergency room treatment for wet casts and one for removing a pencil placed under the cast.

As an ER doctor at Chicago's Children's Memorial Hospital, Steve Crotty, Ben's dad, is all too familiar with some of casts' nastier complications.

Casts that aren't waterproof can get moldy, and Crotty said he's "seen maggots crawling out of casts" that kids got wet.

So when Ben's doctor offered a splint as an alternative, his dad readily accepted.

"This is nice because he can take a bath and we just take it off," Crotty said.

Ben broke his wrist in mid-March when he tumbled down the family's stairs.

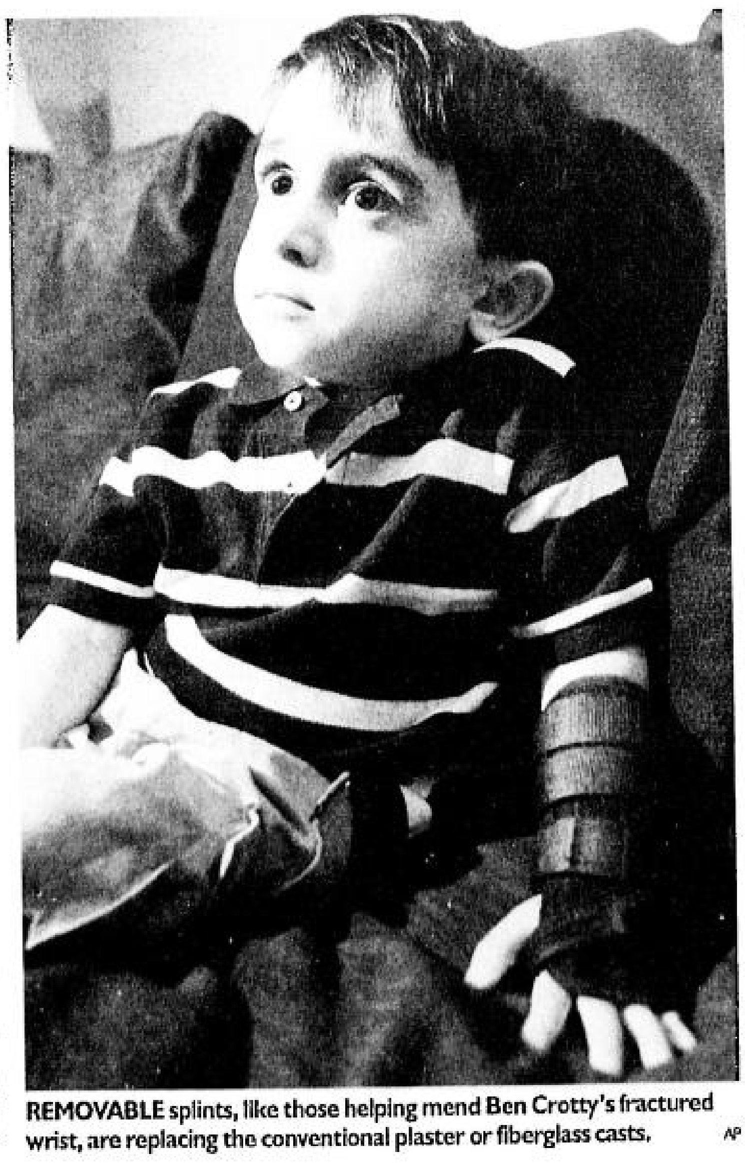
"I fell down and I hurt myself, and I cried and I cried and I cried," Ben explained.

Some physicians still hesitate to put splints on young children, fearing they will remove them at will.

Ben said he didn't like his splint "because I can't play with two hands," but his mother, Sheeba, said he balked whenever she wanted to remove it because he remembered his doctor's admonition.

Ben's splint was removed for good on April 7, three weeks after his injury.

Advances in splints have revolutionized treatment of wrist fractures in the past few years, Fernandez said. *AP*



REMOVABLE splints, like those helping mend **Ben Crotty's** fractured wrist, are replacing the conventional plaster or fiberglass casts. AP

Thaksin foes vow to revive street protests

BANGKOK, THAILAND—OPPOSITION groups said Monday they will revive street protests against Thailand's outgoing prime minister, accusing him of controlling the government from behind the scenes despite having handed power to a deputy.

Months of street protests forced Thaksin Shinawatra to step aside and appoint an acting prime minister.

However, the People's Alliance for Democracy, which led the antigovernment street protests, laid out a new calendar for demonstrations in the coming weeks after a pause around recent elections and the traditional Thai New Year holiday, which ended Sunday.

"We are fighting to root out Thaksin's regime from politics," said an alliance spokesperson, Parnthep Pourpongpan. "Even though he has declared a break from politics, he is pulling the strings behind the acting government, and we cannot accept that."

Parnthep said the People's Alliance for Democracy, or PAD, had planned a rally Monday in the eastern province of Sa Kaeo and more in southern Thailand over the next two weeks until May 2, when a major rally is planned in the capital, Bangkok.

Thaksin had called April 2 snap election to defuse the antigovernment protests. But the vote—boycotted by the opposition—raised new complaints.

The PAD and opposition groups filed two complaints to the Election Commission before the election, accusing Thaksin and his party of fraud in the run-up to the vote. The commission has not said when it will rule on the complaints. *AP*

The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Thousands of suicide bombers ready

Defiant Iran says US attack on its nuke facilities will spawn bloody reprisal

TEHRAN—IRAN AGAIN WARNED THE UNITED States Sunday against attacking its nuclear facilities, saying it had tens of thousands of would-be suicide bombers at the ready and can count on the support of militants across the region.

With the Islamic regime continuing to flout a UN Security Council demand for a freeze in uranium enrichment by April 28, Pope Benedict XVI also weighed into the dispute—appealing for "serious and honest" talks to achieve "an honorable solution" for all parties.

"The United States should be aware that it is not in a position to create another crisis in the region," Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said.

"Iran has not excluded the possibility of an American aggression against it," influential former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani also said during a visit to Syria.

"Iran is undergoing psychological warfare and is resolved to defend its rights," Rafsanjani said, adding that "the United States will not risk using force."

And in another display of defiance, a hardline Iranian group said it had managed to enroll 55,000 people for suicide attacks against Israel and Western powers—an ominous message even though many observers see the recruitment drive as a symbolic action.

The crisis over Iran's nuclear ambitions has worsened over the past week following the regime's announcement that its scientists managed to enrich uranium to the level needed to make reactor fuel.

Iran insists its program is strictly peaceful, but enrichment technology can also be extended to make atomic weapons—hence the UN demand for a moratorium while an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) probe continues.

And the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington-based think tank, said satellite images showed Iran has expanded and reinforced its main nuclear fuel processing facilities in Isfahan and Natanz, possibly to prepare them for a military strike.

The United States is now pushing for tough UN action, with several US press reports saying that military options were being looked into.

But Iran—buoyed by high oil prices and confident that US troops are bogged down in neighboring Iraq—appears confident it can deter any sanctions or attack. *AFP*

THE DANUBE River, fed by heavy rain and melting snow in central Europe, rose to a 111-year record high, displacing hundreds of people across the Balkans and putting tens of thousands more at risk. AP

Southeastern Europe fears more flooding

BELGRADE—SOUTHEASTERN Europe on Sunday braced itself for more flooding as meteorologists said the Danube river, which has reached its highest level in more than 100 years, would rise again in coming days.

In Serbia, the Danube and other major rivers eased slightly on Sunday, but local flood defense teams continued strengthening embankments in preparation for new floodwaters.

In Belgrade and Smederevo, a town some 40 kilometers east of the capital, hard machinery, sand-filled trucks and fire engines have been working constantly since Saturday building up new embankments on the Danube, private B92 radio reported.

Authorities suspended traffic in streets along the river bank in Smederevo, as well as railroad traffic to the town.

The level of the Danube there reached 8.45 meters (27 feet), some 40 centimeters more than the highest level ever recorded, and it was expected to continue rising.

At least 500 homes in towns and villages along the Danube were under water and the inhabitants were forced to evacuate.

The river had already reached 9.75 meters in the eastern Serbian town of Veliko Gradiste, where the river makes a natural border with Romania, but defense teams have so far managed to prevent floods there. *AFP*

Rumsfeld still dogged by clash with general

WASHINGTON—HEADING A LIST of grievances against embattled Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is his reported disregard for the views of military brass, including that of the four-star general who had argued for a robust US troop presence in Iraq.

Gen. Eric Ken Shinseki was the first Asian-American four-star general in US history, and, as chief of the US Army, the first person of Asian ancestry to lead a branch of the military.

Some military observers believe, however, that his career hit the skids under Rumsfeld's tenure.

Frosty relations between the Japanese-American general and the US defense secretary, including over pre-war Iraq planning, apparently contributed to Rumsfeld's decision to announce Shinseki's successor in April 2002—some 14 months before he was due to retire.

Shinseki and Rumsfeld reportedly disagreed over numerous military policy issues, but nowhere more so than over proposed US troop strength in Iraq.

At a February 2003 Senate hearing, Shinseki told lawmakers that taking full control of Iraq would likely require a deployment of several hundred thousand US troops—some five times the figure endorsed by the US defense secretary.

RUMSFELD REUTERS

"Something on the order of 700,000 soldiers are probably a figure that would be required. We're talking about post-hostilities control over a piece of geography that's fairly significant, with the kinds of ethnic tensions that could lead to other problems," he told the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, just a few weeks before the US invasion.

Angry Pentagon officials at the time derisively called Shinseki's estimate "wildly off the mark."

But Shinseki's prescient testimony has dogged Rumsfeld, as US troops struggle to subdue a tenacious insurgency in Iraq. Many military strategists now coalesce around the view that a more sizeable US force in Iraq might have been advisable after all. *AFP*

US to probe 'friendly fire' deaths of Afghan civilians, policemen

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN—THE US military on Sunday announced that it would investigate deaths linked to two combat operations in Afghanistan in the past two days against insurgents believed to be tied to the Taliban.

Seven civilians were reported killed in one battle. In the other battle, civilians were reported killed or wounded, and four Afghan police officers were said by villagers to have been killed by US fire.

The prompt decision to investigate the circumstances in both incidents and to announce the step reflected a new openness by the US military command about its operations in Afghanistan. But it also revealed coordination problems among Afghan forces, the American military and other foreign forces in Afghanistan as the insurgency that is believed to be linked to the country's former Taliban rulers has found strength with the return of spring weather.

Coalition forces fought insurgents in Kunar Province in the east on Saturday night, pounding a house and a cave where militants were holed up, using air support, artillery and direct fire. "Several of the insurgents are believed to have been killed; the rest retreated," said a US military statement describing the operation. But in the aftermath, soldiers found that civilians had been killed or wounded in the fighting. Three wounded civilians were taken to an American military base at Asadabad for treatment, and the remains of the dead were being returned to their families, the statement said.

"Our hearts go out to the families of the innocent victims of this battle," Army Maj. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, the operational commander of the US-led coalition force, said in the statement. "I've directed an investigation to determine the facts in this matter."

The statement accused the insurgents of endangering civilians by fighting close to areas where people live.

In a separate statement, the US military said it had ordered an investigation of an incident in which four Afghan policemen were killed Friday in joint operations against forces suspected of being Taliban in Kandahar Province in the south. Villagers reported that an American helicopter had fired on and killed the policemen in Sartak. Civilian casualties were also reported in that attack. *NYT*

New Yorkers now more civil—it's the law!

By Winnie Hu

NEW YORKERS ARE KNOWN TO THROW things onto the field at Yankee Stadium. At times they boo their own mayor at parades.

But somehow a city whose residents have long been scorned for their churlish behavior is now being praised for adopting rules and laws that govern personal conduct, making New York an unlikely model for legislating courtesy and decorum.

From restrictions on sports fans and car alarms to a new $50 fine on subway riders who rest their feet on a seat, New York's efforts to curb everyday annoyances and foster more civility among its residents have increasingly been studied and debated far from home.

When Chicago's aldermen wanted to keep rowdy fans from descending upon Wrigley Field, they looked to New York, which has arrested 11 people at Yankee and Shea stadiums under a 2004 law that makes it illegal to interfere with professional sports events.

When Boston and San Francisco lawmakers considered silencing cell phones in their movie theaters and playhouses, they, too, looked to New York, which imposed a $50 fine in 2003 on callers who dial up during movies, concerts and Broadway shows.

"I think it's a good idea to remind the general public of what is expected of them," said Alderman Edward M. Burke, a leader of the Chicago City Council.

LINDA Moulhem takes part in the annual Easter Parade April 16 in New York City. Revelers dressed in decorated hats and outfits in celebration of the Easter holiday which is synonymous with spring. GETTY IMAGES/AFP

Under Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, New York has increasingly focused on social policies that were once thought to be beyond the realm of government. Bloomberg was largely responsible for the city's smoking ban. Bloomberg also overhauled the city's noise code for the first time in three decades, taking aim at loud nightclubs, barking dogs and even that staple of summer, the Mister Softee jingle, all in the interests of keeping the neighborhood peace.

Councilman Peter F. Vallone Jr. introduced a measure that he calls a lesson in Parenting 101: Children under the age of 10 would not be allowed in movie theaters after 10 p.m.

Donna Lieberman, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, has not yet raised objections to these laws, but cautioned that some such laws could interfere with privacy rights.

Still, many New Yorkers say that the city is becoming a more civil place. The sports fan law, for one, is praised by Paul Lo Duca and other Mets players during a pregame video shown at Shea Stadium.

Robert J. Kasdon, the Mets' vice president of security, said: "It's the most effective law of its kind," he said. "Baseball is a family event, and this law helps us maintain that atmosphere."

Peter Post, the director of the Emily Post Institute, which instructs schools, businesses and government organizations on etiquette, said that while legislation may not be the best approach to improving public politeness, "I think we've reached a tipping point with rudeness. Instead of people quietly putting up with rude behavior, they're finally saying, 'I don't have to put up with that anymore.'" *NYT*

KHMER ROUGE HORROR AFP

Women look at thousands of skulls at the Choeung Ek killing fields memorial near Phnom Penh, April 17, as Cambodia marks the 31st anniversary of the Khmer Rouge's rise to power. About two million people died from starvation, overwork or execution during the 1975-79 Khmer Rouge rule.

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Sparks, Jewels seek to keep lead

RED BULL'S Cyrus Baguio (right) and Alaska's Jeffrey Cariaso battle for the lo[illegible] ball during their PBA ga[illegible] Sunday. The Aces won, 83[illegible] ERIK ARAZAS

AFTER HALTING THE MONTANA JEWELS' FOUR-game winning run, Toyota Otis is looking at claiming another big victim.

Hoping to sustain their strong start, the Sparks aim to stay on top of the PBL Unity Cup when they clash with the Magnolia Spinners at 2 p.m. today at the San Andres Gym.

Dropped into a share of the lead with their conquerors, the Jewels will also try to keep their piece of the lead when they take the floor at 4 p.m. versus the Hapee-PCU Teethmasters.

Tailenders in the last two conferences, the Sparks will come into the game with history not on their side.

To secure a fourth straight win, Toyota would have to go through a Magnolia side it has beaten only once in nine previous meetings.

"They have a tall and formidable frontline so you can't take it easy when you are up against them," said Toyota coach Louie Alas.

With veteran point guard Boyet Bautista and forward Erick Rodriguez listed as doubtful because of injuries, the Sparks, who share the top spot with the Jewels at 4-1, will again bank on center Joe Devance.

The 6-foot-7 Devance is averaging 12.8 points and 9.8 rebounds.

"Though some of my players have various injuries, we will still play as hard as we can," said Alas. "We won our last three games because of extra effort, especially on defense."

Expected to lead Magnolia's offensive charge is Fil-Am Kelly Williams, the finals Most Valuable Player last conference.

But after norming 16.7 points in his first four games, Williams was woeful the last time out, his 2-of-27 shooting led to the Spinners' downfall at the hands of the Teethmasters.

Montana, led by Alex Compton and Froilan Baguion, will also try to recover from its first setback in five games.

Overcoming a huge 20-point deficit, Toyota Otis forged a come-from-behind 73-65 victory over Montana. Patrick Cabahug delivered off the bench, scoring 10 points in the final period.

Guard Ronald Bucao also provided an unexpected lift in Hapee-PCU's 77-60 triumph over Magnolia.

While Jason Castro and Gabby Espinas delivered their usual numbers, Bucao contributed 11 points and four assists.

Castro remains as the league top scorer by norming 18 points per game, while Espinas maintains a double-double average of 11 markers and 10 boards.

Jasmine W. Payo

STANDINGS	W	L
Toyota Otis	4	1
Montana	4	1
Rain or Shine	4	2
Granny Goose	3	3
Magnolia	2	3
Hapee-PCU	2	3
Harbour Center	2	4
TeleTech	1	5

GAMES TODAY (*San Andres Gym*)
2 p.m.—Toyota Otis vs Magnolia
4 p.m.—Hapee-PCU vs Montana

WHAT'S INSIDE

- **Baddeley survives mid-round wobble** /A24
- **Lakers back; Bulls, Wizards in playoff** /A24

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Deng fires 26 on his 21st b-day

MIAMI, FLORIDA—LUOL DENG WAS CELEBRATING more than his birthday on Sunday as he helped the Chicago Bulls book a National Basketball Association playoff berth.

On the day he turned 21, Deng scored 26 points on 12-of-17 shooting as the Bulls rallied to beat the playoff-bound Miami Heat 117-93 and clinch their second straight postseason appearance.

Ben Gordon and Andres Nocioni added 18 points apiece, and Kirk Hinrich chipped in 17 and eight assists for the Bulls, who improved to 39-41 and won for the 11th time in 13 games.

That put them in a three-way tie with Indiana and Milwaukee for sixth place in the Eastern Conference.

The victory also did a favor for the fifth-placed Washington Wizards, insuring them of their playoff spot.

The Heat held a 40-25 lead with 10:45 left in the second quarter, but the Bulls outscored them 33-13 the rest of the half and pushed their advantage to 88-74 entering the fourth quarter.

Antoine Walker had 22 points to pace Miami, who own a record of 52-28 and will be the second seed in the East. They could face Chicago in the first round. *AFP*

Zhang rewards China 1st title

BEIJING—CHINA'S ZHANG XIYAN CLAIMED the nation's first professional boxing title at the weekend when she outpointed America's Alicia Ashley to lift the World Boxing Council (WBC) women's lightweight crown.

Zhang's 10-round unanimous points victory on Saturday delighted home fans in China's southwest city of Chengdu and had the country's boxing officials talking up a new era for the sport.

"This is Chinese professional boxing's first world champion. I believe the boxing world will remember China's emergence and (our) professional boxers' confidence will be stronger," Chinese Boxing Association director Chang Jianping was quoted as saying in a local newspaper.

Zhang only turned professional three months ago and despite conceding a wealth of experience to her veteran opponent, the 26-year-old's determination gave her a vital edge on the judges' scorecards.

"I was quite nervous competing in my first world title fight," Zhang told a local newspaper. "The world title belt is the highest honor in professional boxing."

Attracting 12 boxers from eight countries vying for various WBC titles, the Chengdu tilt was China's biggest boxing meeting to date. *Reuters*

Lakers back; Bulls, Wizards in playoff

PHOENIX Suns' James Jones watches a ball go through the hoop during his team's 109-89 loss to the Los Angeles Lakers in Los Angeles. REUTERS

LOS ANGELES—THE LOS ANGELES Lakers, Chicago Bulls and Washington Wizards all clinched National Basketball Association playoff berths with victories over possible opening-round opponents on Sunday.

Kobe Bryant scored 27 of his 43 points in the first half as the Lakers returned to the playoffs after a one year absence with a 109-89 victory over the short-handed Phoenix Suns.

The Bulls pushed their way into the postseason by coming from behind to beat the Miami Heat while the Wizards snapped a five-game losing streak with a victory over Cleveland.

Lamar Odom added 14 points and 11 rebounds and Smush Parker 12 and eight assists for Los Angeles (44-37), which has won four straight and is 1 1/2 games ahead of eighth-place Sacramento (42-38).

The seventh-place team would face Phoenix in the first round of the playoffs.

The league's leading scorer Bryant again led the way for the Lakers.

In his 27th 40-point game of the season, Bryant made 11-of-28 shots and 20-of-23 free throws in 37 minutes.

Facing a Suns (52-28) team that already had locked up the Pacific Division title and was playing without reigning MVP Steve Nash (thigh) and Raja Bell (quad), the Lakers dominated from the outset, never trailing and leading by as many as 26 points.

Luol Deng made sure his 21st birthday was an enjoyable one as he scored 26 points on 12-of-17 shooting to lead Chicago over Miami 117-93.

Ben Gordon and Andres Nocioni added 18 points apiece and Kirk Hinrich chipped in 17 and eight assists for the Bulls (39-41), who won for the 11th time in 13 games to move into a three-way tie with Indiana and Milwaukee for sixth place in the East.

Washington (39-40) is in fifth place and also clinched a playoff spot with the Bulls' win.

The Heat held a 40-25 lead with 10:45 left in the second quarter, but the Bulls outscored them, 33-13, the rest of the half and pushed their advantage to 88-74 entering the fourth quarter.

Chicago led comfortably throughout the final 12 minutes. *AFP*

SOLAR SPORTS will air Utah-San Antonio tussle at 8:30 a.m.

Baddeley survives mid-round wobble for breakthrough win

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, SOUTH Carolina—Australian Aaron Baddeley survived a mid-round wobble to capture his first US PGA Tour victory here Sunday at the Verizon Heritage.

"To win, it's a relief, but it's a dream," Baddeley said. "It's a goal that's been reached. So it's very satisfying. This week was an amazing week."

Baddeley opened up a two-shot lead, then fell behind by two before battling back to post a one-shot victory over American Jim Furyk.

Baddeley entered the final round tied for the lead with Furyk and carded a one-under-par 70 for a 15-under total of 269.

Furyk signed for a 71 to finish at 14-under 270.

Baddeley birdied three of his first five holes to open a two-shot cushion over Furyk, the 2003 US Open champion who was looking for his first victory of the season.

Baddeley coughed up his lead with back-to-back bogeys at seven and eight and fell two adrift after a bogey at 11.

But Furyk bogeyed 12 and Baddeley strung together consecutive birdies at 14 and 15 to regain the lead.

Both players bogeyed the par-three 17th before Baddeley clinched the win with a six-foot par putt on 18 after Furyk's birdie attempt from 12 feet slid by.

A two-time runner-up on tour, Baddeley earned $954,000 and a two-year tour exemption with the win.

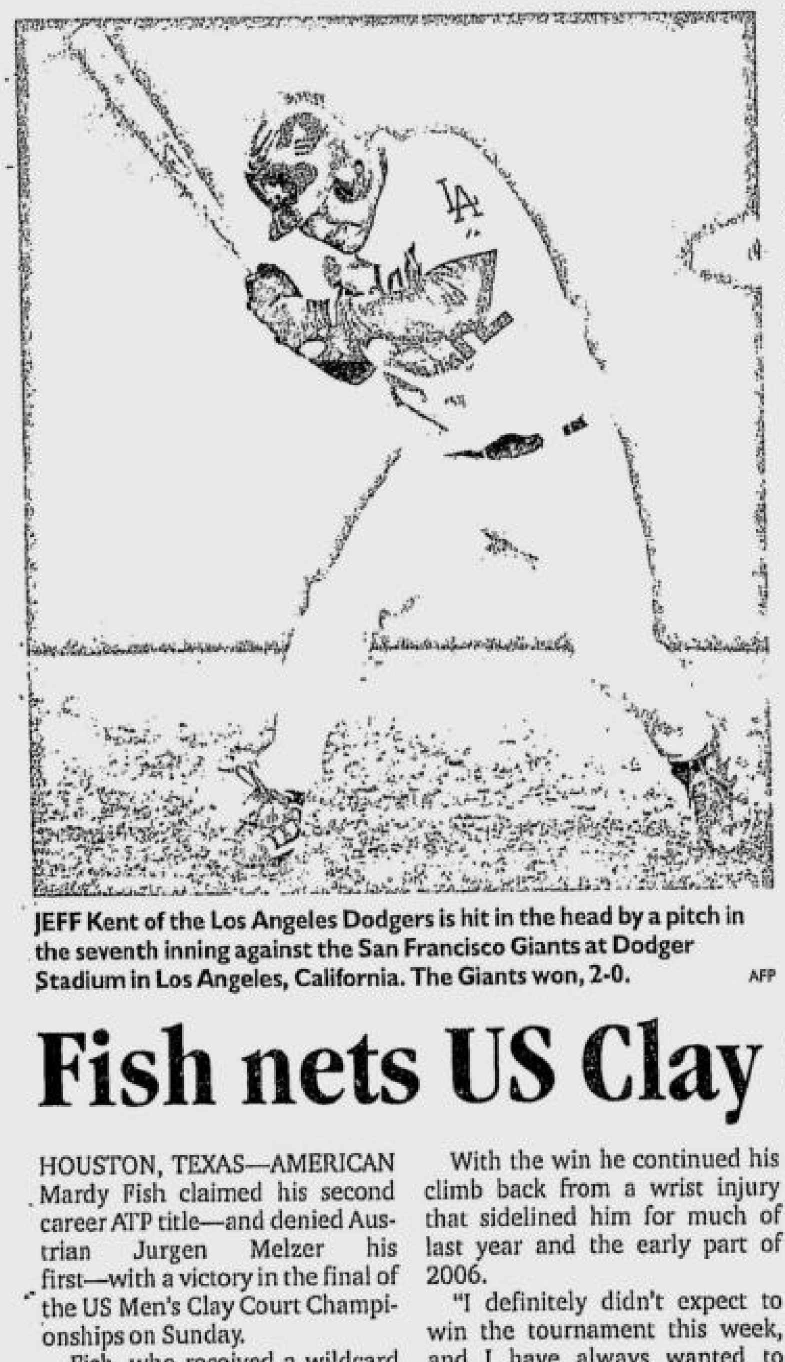
"I knew it was going to be a tough day. Jim is such a competitor," Baddeley said. "I knew Jim wasn't going anywhere. I knew he wasn't going to lose the tournament. So when I got a couple up early, I thought just to keep plugging away, keep trying to play solid. I knew if I could just hang in there and make a few birdies, I would have a chance.

"I was very surprised on the last hole to win. We couldn't believe it. That putt, I read it a little bit to the right. Even though it lipped in the right side, it looked like it was in the hole."

Billy Mayfair carded a 69 and finished tied for third with Vaughn Taylor (66) at 13-under. *AFP*

AARON Baddeley gets a kiss from his wife Richelle after clinching the title. AP

Guerrero homers twice, Angels end skid



JEFF Kent of the Los Angeles Dodgers is hit in the head by a pitch in the seventh inning against the San Francisco Giants at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, California. The Giants won, 2-0. AFP

BALTIMORE—VLADIMIR GUERRERO HOMERed twice and drove in three runs to back a fine pitching performance by John Lackey, and the Los Angeles Angels snapped a three-game skid by beating the Baltimore Orioles 9-3 Sunday.

Chone Figgins also homered for the Angels, who got 13 hits in their most productive offensive showing of the season.

Guerrero hit solo homers in the first and seventh innings, and an RBI single in the fifth. Lackey (2-1) allowed two runs and six hits in eight innings. He struck out five and walked none.

In Detroit, Chris Shelton hit his Major League Baseball-leading eighth home run and Mike Maroth threw seven shutout innings for the Tigers who beat the Indians, 1-0.

Shelton homered over the left-center field fence against Cliff Lee (1-1) with one out in the fourth inning. Five of Shelton's homers have been solo shots. Maroth (2-0) allowed three hits, struck out five and walked two.

In Boston, Josh Beckett won his third straight start and Alex Gonzalez had an RBI single for the Red Sox who beat the Mariners, 3-2. *AP*

Pujols lifts Cardinals past Reds with third home run

ST. LOUIS—ALBERT PUJOLS' THIRD HOME run of the game, a go-ahead two-run shot in the ninth inning, gave the St. Louis Cardinals an 8-7 victory over the Cincinnati Reds on Sunday.

Pujols' eighth homer came on a 1-2 pitch from David Weathers (0-1), ending a game that featured five lead changes. His second career three-homer game and sixth career game-ending homer topped off a 4-2 opening homestand at new Busch Stadium. He also matched career highs with five RBIs and four runs scored.

Rich Aurilia had three hits and two RBIs and Adam Dunn and Austin Kearns homered on consecutive at-bats in the fifth for the Reds. In Los Angeles, Brad Hennessey worked 6 1-3 shutout innings, and San Francisco won over Los Angeles, 2-0, despite another tough day at the plate for Barry Bonds.

Hennessey (1-0) allowed three hits while walking three and striking out two before being relieved by Scott Munter with the bases loaded and one out in the seventh. Munter worked out of trouble by striking out pinch-hitter Ricky Ledee and retiring Dioner Navarro on a fly to right. Tim Worrell retired Ramon Martinez with two on and two out to end the eighth. *AP*

Fish nets US Clay Court trophy

HOUSTON, TEXAS—AMERICAN Mardy Fish claimed his second career ATP title—and denied Austrian Jurgen Melzer his first—with a victory in the final of the US Men's Clay Court Championships on Sunday.

Fish, who received a wildcard invitation, rallied to down Melzer 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 and add the title to his only previous tournament win, in Stockholm in 2003.

The 24-year-old American, who won the silver medal the 2004 Athens Olympics, had tumbled to 212th in the world after rising as high in 17th in March 2004.

With the win he continued his climb back from a wrist injury that sidelined him for much of last year and the early part of 2006.

"I definitely didn't expect to win the tournament this week, and I have always wanted to come to this tournament and play well," Fish said. "I love this tournament."

Coming into the week Fish's record for the year was a modest 4-6, and he spent the previous week at the Challenger event in Tallahassee, Florida, where he won.

"I felt like I was playing well in Indian Wells and Miami and winning the Challenger last week," Fish said. "After winning here, I am very confident.

"I feel like I am playing good tennis, and I definitely don't feel like the comeback is complete. I've still a long ways to go. I'm still outside the top 100, so I need to keep going, and keep motivated and positive."

Melzer, 24, slipped to 0-3 in career finals, having lost to Robby Ginepri at Newport in 2003 and to Nikolay Davydenko at St. Poelten, Austria, last year. *AFP*

MARDY Fish reacts after winning match point against Jurgen Melzer in the US Men's Clay Court final. AP

China golf booms but local bets lag behind

BEIJING—WITH COURSES SPRINGING UP all over the country, sponsors queuing up to associate themselves with the game and six events on the 2006 European Tour calendar, golf in mainland China is booming.

A proliferation of glossy magazines dedicated to the sport and "Golf" shops on what sometimes seems to be every street corner in Beijing pay testament to the grip the game has taken on urban China.

The first golf course on the mainland opened just 22 years ago and from that standing start, there are now in excess of 250 scattered over the country with more being carved out of the landscape each month.

The game received an unlikely boost from the 2003 SARS epidemic, when China's growing entrepreneurial class decided that doing business on the fairway was preferable to the office, where the risk of contracting the flu-like virus was higher.

Golf does not come cheap, however, with membership at the Nick Faldo-designed Honghua course in northeast Beijing, which hosted the China Open last weekend, costing $65,000.

The Chinese capital's most prestigious club, Pine Valley, costs an eye-watering $180,000 to join with an annual subscription of $7,500. That, in a city where average disposable income at the end of 2005 was around 17,700 yuan ($2,209).

There is plenty of money in the professional game too and Swedish carmakers Volvo, the first sponsors of golf in China in 1995, announced at the weekend that they had agreed in principle to extend their backing of the China Open until 2015.

They also announced that the prize pot would be going up by $200,000 to $2 million next year when the tournament returns to Shanghai after visits to Shenzhen last November and Beijing.

There are, however, a few flies in the ointment, not least the lack of a local Tiger Woods to capture the imagination of the population.

Of 22 mainland Chinese in the draw for last weekend's meet, 21 missed the cut, including Zhang Lianwei and Liang Wenchong. *Reuters*

Toyota-Iloilo vs M. Lhuillier-Cebu today

VISAYAS DIVISION STANDINGS	W	L
M. Lhuillier-Cebu	3	0
Landmasters-Toledo	2	1
W. Negros College	x	x
*Mantawi Traders	0	2
*Toyota-Iloilo	0	2
MINDANAO DIVISION		
Iligan City	6	1
PacMan-GenSan	5	2
Pryce Pharma-MisOr	4	4
Montana-Davao	4	4
Cagayan de Oro	0	8

*Playing at press time

CEBU CITY—THE TOYOTA-Iloilo Warriors continue their tour of Cebu Province as they face unbeaten Visayas Division leader M. Lhuillier Kwarta Padala-Cebu tonight in the resumption of the ML Kwarta Padala Mindanao Visayas Basketball Association (MVBA) First Conference at the New Cebu City Coliseum.

Game time is at 5:30.

The Jewelers are unscathed in three contests in this league backed by ML Kwarta Padala, Cokaliong Shipping Lines, Nature's Spring Drinking Water, Panasonic, Molten and Sulpicio Lines.

The Warriors lost to the Jewelers, 72-86, in their MVBA debut last April 2 at the University of San Agustin Gym.

The Warriors, backed by the Iloilo Basketball League (IBL) and its president Snook Divinagracia, are definitely aching for payback.

The Warriors were seeking their first win at presstime last night against the also winless Mantawi Traders at the Mandaue Cultural and Sports Complex.

M. Lhuillier head coach and Cebu City South District Councilor Raul "Yayoy" Alcoseba will turn to reliable guards Woodrow Enriquez (15.3 PPG), Mike Manigo (11.3 PPG) and Stephen Padilla (11.0 PPG), power playing Enrico Llanto (13.0 PPG) and the exciting Jayford Rodriguez (10.3 PPG) to keep their win-loss card perfect.

It will be the turn of the Cebu Landmasters-Toledo (2-1) of realtor Joe Soberano to host the Warriors tomorrow at the Barba Gym in Toledo City.

Coo, Santos top Makati Bowlers Cup 1st tourney

THE SUCCESSFUL LAUNCHING of the first all-lady bowlers club, The Makati Lady Bowlers, was held recently at the Powerbowl Bowling Center, Powerplant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati City.

Bong Coo won the Seniors and Class O/A Divisions, Nelia Santos in Class B, Gina Avecilla in Class C and Kakai Exequiel in the Juniors Division.

The second playing game is scheduled on May 6 also at the Powerbowl Center. Registration starts at 1:30 p.m. and roll-off at 3 p.m. Fellowship games will be held on a Saturday of each month.

The Makati Lady Bowlers is being headed by Yoly Araullo, president, and Bong Coo, tournament director. Call Boysie Castillo at 0919-4200128 or Powerbowl Center at 8981624.

10-year-old tops Pichay youth chess

YOUTH PREVAILED OVER EXPERIENCE AS Jan Emmanuel Garcia bested the opposition, including five National Masters, to top the President Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr. 14-year-old and under Age Group Chess Tune Up Games Sunday at the Syncopados Music Bar, in Mabini, Malate, Manila.

The 10-year-old find from San Beda College beat National Master Alex Milagrosa of Tagbilaran City after 50 moves of a King's Indian Defense in the sixth and final round to score 5.5 points and capture the title in the event hosted by Surigao del Sur representative and NCFP president Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr.

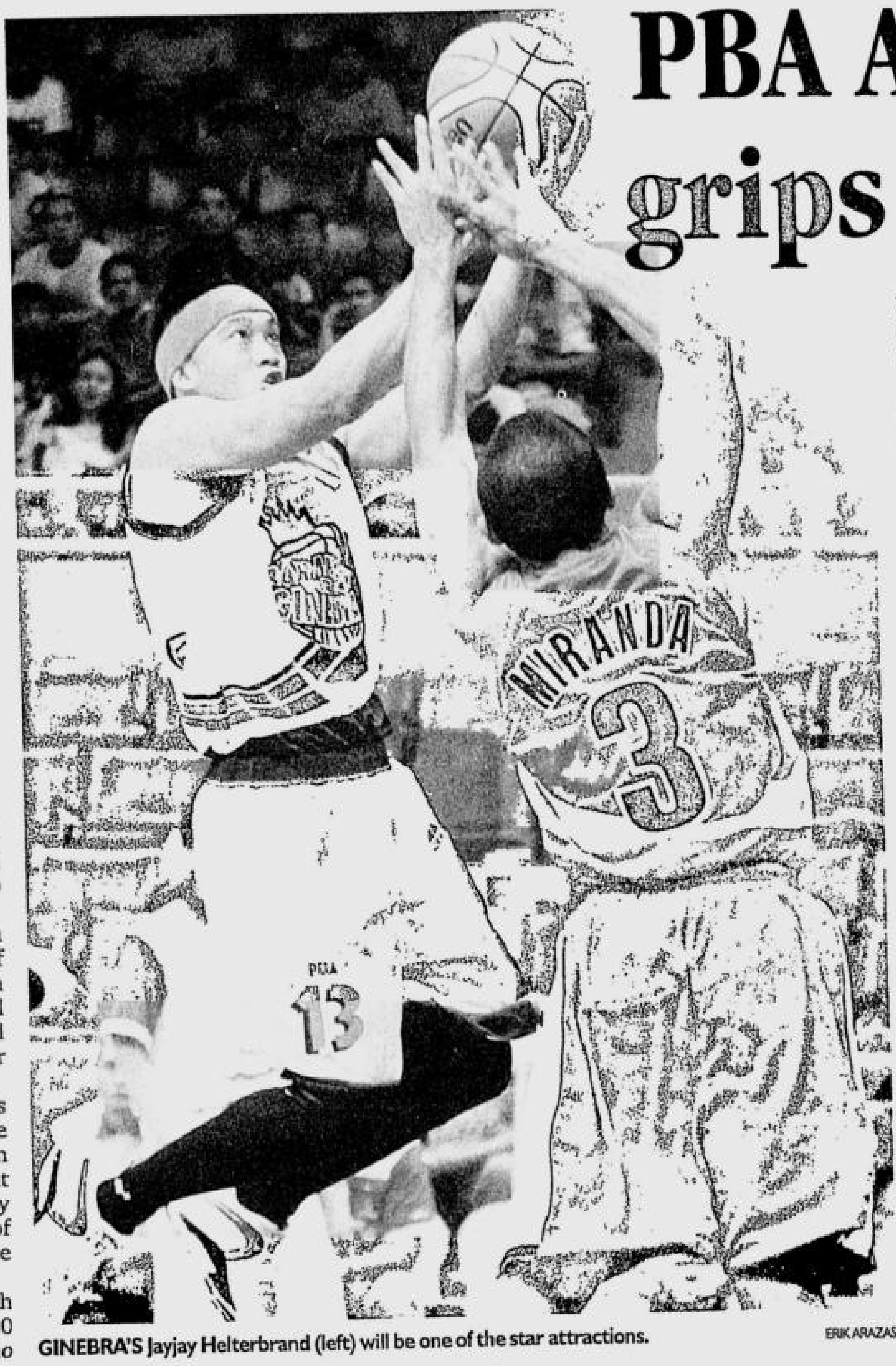
The tournament aims to develop the chess skills of the young woodpushers according to NCFP spokesperson and RP six-time executive champion dentist Jenny Mayor.

Garcia, the eldest son of lawyer Florand and the NCR top board player in the 2006 Palarong Pambansa elementary division next month in Naga City, also upset Mayor and NCFP executive director and two-time Olympian NM Samuel Estimo and drew with NM Almario Marlon Bernardino Jr.

Bernardino, the 2005 Virginia, USA Open rapid champion, beat Jude Emil Fronda of Alaminos City, Pangasinan, after 55 moves of a King's Indian Defense to score 5.0 points and share 2nd to 4th places with Milagrosa and Rizal Technological University (RTU) junior standout Richelieu Salcedo III.

Sharing the limelight in the one-day affair is Salcedo, who hails from Misamis Oriental. He bested Estimo and NM Efren Bagamasbad in the early rounds of the tournament and beat former World Youth representative Christy Lamiel Bernales of Nueva Ecija, a protégé of Nueva Ecija governor Tomas Joson III, in the last round.

Nine players tied for 5th to 13th places with Mayor posting the highest tie break in the 4.0 pointers bracket. *NM Marlon Bernardino*



GINEBRA'S Jayjay Helterbrand (left) will be one of the star attractions.

ERIK ARAZAS

PBA All-Star fever grips Misamis Or.

MISAMIS ORIENTAL HAS STEPPED UP ITS PREPARATION BARELY two weeks before the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) visits the province for the 2006 Hope Cigarette PBA All-Star weekend.

Fans from Mindanao's third largest province now await the arrival of the league's top players and other standouts taking part in the April 27-29 show being supported by Chowking.

And Gov. Oscar Moreno vows to make this year's edition of the mid-season spectacle a celebration like no other.

"We are very, very excited, anxious and delighted to be chosen as host of this year's PBA All-Star weekend. Just about everybody is waiting for it," Moreno said.

While Misamis Oriental's capital city of Cagayan de Oro has hosted numerous PBA games in the past, the excitement has not been this great since commissioner Noli Eala announced it as winner over Iloilo as this year's All-Star weekend host.

"We're looking forward to this historic occasion. We know that it is very difficult to make everybody happy and enjoy the weekend, but we do hope that we can measure up to the task," he added Moreno.

Misamis Oriental is the fourth province in the last six years to host the annual extravaganza.

Laoag City staged the meet last year, Cebu did its share in 2004 while Iloilo was the All-Star host in 2001.

"Just like the people of Misamis Oriental, your PBA is excited as well to bring the All-Star weekend there. Rest assured of an exciting and fun-filled three days of hardcourt action," Eala said.

Huge banners and streamers of the All-Star weekend are now prominent along the streets of the province all the way up to the playing site at the Xavier high school gym.

Also part of the local government's preparation is the holding of an agri-fare that will feature the local and cultural products of the province.

An outreach program involving different charities is also being planned by the local government, the project being a regular staple of the All-Star weekend.

As in the past, the 2006 All-Stars will also showcase side events like the slam dunk, three-point shootout, trick shot and obstacle challenge.

The duel between the All Stars from the North and South remains as the centerpiece of the weekend event.

The South squad is hoping to avenge the 128-131 setback it suffered last year as Jayjay Helterbrand erupted for 38 big points to pace the North team.

SPORTSWATCH

Baliuag Lodge No. 301 slates golfest

THE BALIUAG LODGE NO. 301 WILL HOLD ITS 3RD OPEN GOLF TOURNAMENT on Thursday at the Royal Northwood Golf Course and Country Club in Coral na Bato, San Rafael, Bulacan. Over 100 players, including the hard rock group and brethren of Masonic District No. 31, are expected to vie for top honors under the format 36 tournament, according to Angelito M. Guinto. Non-members are welcome. Registration starts at 6 a.m. and tee off time at 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Major raffle prizes and trophies await the winners. For details, call Crisostomo F. Wan at 09175321962.

Jet ski riders hold briefing today

THE JET SPORTS ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES WILL BE STAGING THE kickoff leg of the 2006 Petron National Jet Ski Series on April 22-23 at the Waterfront Beach of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA). All competing riders are enjoined to attend the rider's briefing today at 7 p.m. at the Manila Yacht Club. JSAP president Dong Arcilla and Race Director Sonny Yalung will discuss important details and other regulations with the riders to ensure a safe and accident-free race. For details, call Networx Jetsports at 413-3109 or log on at www.networxjetsports.com.

JVC Pampanga badminton up

OVER 500 PLAYERS OPEN THEIR BID IN THE SECOND LEG OF THE JVC REGIO-nal Badminton Championships today at the Excel Badminton Center in San Fernando, Pampanga. The organizing IMG said the field doubled last year's cast. JVC (Phils.) Inc. president and CEO Hideyuki Takato, general manager Kazue Salud and marketing manager Rachel Bacsal will grace the opening rites at 9:30 a.m. along with Mayor Oscar Rodriguez, movie stars Maricel Morales and Isabel Granada and Pampanga sports director Gil Cortez, who will represent Gov. Mark Lapid. Paolo Dawal of Bulacan and Pavielle Alejo of Nueva Ecija-UST will be back to defend their titles.

NCA cockfest at Roligon today

AFICIONADOS CAN EXPECT 64 QUALITY FIGHTS TODAY WHEN THE NATIONal Cockers Association (NCA) 5-cock one-day derby sizzles at Roligon Mega Cockpit beginning at 5 p.m. "The NCA will adopt this one-day, 5-cock format beginning today, so it will be an exciting duel to the finish," said NCA president Gov. Ito Ynares. Derby aces will be fielded by former ambassador Danding Cojuangco, Governor Ynares, Sundance Group, Jun Santiago, Boy Jiao, derby hosts Rudy Albano and Pico Berin, Frank Berin, Ellan Nagano, Vice Gov. Boyet Joson, Manny and Arman Santos, Pepito Ngo, Tony Tan, Boy de Roca, Rep. Butch Pichay, Rey Briones, Madlambayan Brothers and Jet Fernando.

GCAP at San Juan weigh-in today

TODAY IS THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES IN CONNECTION with San Juan Coliseum's Gentlemen Cockers Association of the Philippines (GCAP) 5-cock derby being backed by Sagupaan Complexor 3000. GCAP members and guest participants are requested to submit entries from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. and may call 725-6563 and 725-5369. More than 70 top quality matches are lined up tomorrow. Meanwhile, GCAP founder Patrick Antonio announced the staging of Super Big Event 7-cock derby on April 29, also at SJC.

The thrill in Phil

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

PUTTING PULLED DOWN TIGER WOODS in the recent 70th Masters.

Four strokes Woods could have gained in the last 9 holes as he missed 2 eagle putts inside 10 feet on the two backside par-5s.

He lost by 3 strokes to Mickelson—all of them putts. The world number one even had a 3-putt bogey in the Final 9, a miscue which Mickelson could well afford to commit on his 72nd hole since by then, victory was at hand for the lefty with his 4-shot margin going to the final cup.

In golf, as I keep saying, the pros are almost equal in the aerial aspect of war. It's on land, on the green particularly, where war is either won or lost.

The aerial battle is just half the story. The ground battle—the "green battle," if you will—completes the story.

In grabbing an unfamiliar second spot in the world's most prestigious golf tournament, Tim Clark overemphasized the need to do well on land: he birdied his finishing hole from the sand to steal second from a logjam that included two Masters champions—Fred Couples and Tiger Woods himself.

Clark's unlikely birdie gave him a 69, 2 shots behind Mickelson.

Couples, 46, the Masters winner in 1992, and Woods, 30, a 4-time Masters champion (1997, 2001, 2002 and 2005), were among those tied for third behind Mickelson, who duplicated his 2004 Masters victory.

"I don't really want to trade (my green jacket) next year," Mickelson said. "But I certainly enjoyed having the jacket put on me, rather than putting it on Woods."

The green jacket symbolizes victory in the Masters. The tradition was started in 1934 by Bobby Jones, who built Augusta National and who was the only amateur to nab golf's Grand Slam.

Only a year ago, Woods won the most important jacket in golf when he sank an 18-footer in the first playoff hole against Chris DiMarco.

Woods also birdied the same 18th hole this year, but the effort became all but a case of too late the hero. In fact, he waved away the birdie putt when it dropped in sheer disgust over his day-long putting that was nothing but atrocious.

Oh, well, I must say Woods' sour putting must have been the result, partly or otherwise, of a mental baggage brought on by the condition of his father, Earl. Ravaged by cancer, Earl, the Green Beret, has become too weak and fragile to travel from California to Georgia, marking the first time he wasn't in the Masters since Tiger made his pro debut in the 1997 edition.

"I'm sure he was watching (on TV) and a little mad at me for the way I putted today," Woods said. "I'm sure he knew what I did wrong."

Arnold Palmer, the 4-time Masters champion, said: "Phil putted well today and that was the difference."

With Mickelson's victory, the experts now say Lefty Phil has become Woods' new rival.

Mickelson's Masters victory came one week after winning another big one. That was rare as vintage Bordeaux wine. Likewise, capturing the Masters on April 10 made Mickelson a rare back-to-back winner of the majors, having also won in August 2005 the PGA Championship—the last of the season's four majors.

Mickelson might well be Woods' main foe in the year's remaining three majors—US Open, British Open and PGA. After a 0-42 start since he turned pro in 1992, Mickelson is now 3-of-9 in the majors. He has also dislodged Vijay Singh from second in the world rankings. Singh is now third, Retief Goosen fourth and Ernie Els fifth. Born on June 16, 1970, and pocketing $1,260,000 in winning the 70th Masters, Mickelson has now amassed a total of $37,121,360 in 14 years as a pro.

I'm proud of Mickelson, nicknamed "Phil The Thrill." I'm thrilled since he was my pro in the pro-am of the Toyota World Matchplay in Wentworth, England, in 1996.

That thrill, now 10 years old, has yet to die down.

* * *

Comments to menju@pldtdsl.net

ARMM joins PSC training program

THE AUTONOMOUS REGION IN Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) will join the Philippine Sports Commission's Sports for Peace Top-Start program set May 23-27 in the cities of Maguindanao and Cotabato.

Sports commissioner and Mindanao sports program in-charge Leon Montemayor said that a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed recently by the PSC's top executives and ARMM officials led by Gov. Datu Zaldy Uy Ampatuan for the five-day training and seminar for coaches and athletes.

An estimated 1,500 are expected to join the clinic, where each participant will receive tips in modern techniques to be conducted by accredited lecturers and trainers.

Athletics, sepak takraw, tackwondo, volleyball and badminton are the sports tapped to kick off the program aimed to give the participants the proper and scientific methods in training.

Governor Ampatuan welcomed the program and expressed gratitude to PSC officials led by Montemayor for taking the initiative to bring the agency's grassroots program to his region.

For his part, Montemayor said the partnership between the ARMM and PSC is timely and relevant to the peace-building efforts of the government.

He added that the program is part of the agency's aim to support the underprivileged children in the countryside as envisioned by PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez.

Montemayor said the program will focus on the athlete's competence and performance and help them develop their talents and skills to become highly competitive individuals.

RACING Tips

BY TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Alert One (2), Diamond Sky (8), Island King (1), Society Climber (7), Spoiler (5)
Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Casanova (6), Gemstone (10), Five O'clock (8), Bunker Buster (1), Native Prince (11)
Race 3 (Qrt/Tri)—Chicklet (3), The magician (4), Aminin (1), Miss Vicky (2)
Race 4 (Penta/Qrt/Tri)—King View (7), Modern Classic (6), Lady Tycoon (12), Strong Colony (8), Look of Love/Words Of Joy (11)
Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Kawiliwili (6), Magiliw (1), Carolina Belle (3), Kalashnikov (8)
Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Kim Possible/Distinctive Dancer (8), Deity (3), Game Over (1), Time Deposit (1), Princess Adarna (10)
Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)— Gold Money (1), Pay To Cash (9), War Hero (8), Golden Touch (3), Hurry Prince (11)
Race 8—(Super 6/Qrt/Tri)—Mano Po (10), Noor (12), Pirouette (2), Heart Of Jonna (8), Golden Act (4), Silver Cho Cho (11)

SPORTS

Gonzales paces Jr World qualifying

FORMER WORLD CHAMPION JR GONZALES FIRED a three-under-par 69 yesterday to zoom ahead by seven strokes in boys' Class D even as Miko Alejandro set the early pace in Class A in yesterday's opening round of the Callaway Junior World championship qualifying tournament of the Samsung Jungolf Tour at the Sherwood Hills Golf Club course in Trece Martires, Cavite.

Gonzales, the 7-8 years division winner of the Junior World now campaigning in the 9-10 category, bucked the sweltering heat with four birdies against a bogey for the day's best round to show the way for AR Ramos and Miggy Yee, who both carded 76s.

Alejandro recovered from a slow start with two birdies on his last eight holes for an even-par 72 that put him in front by two over Allan Guy and Mico Yee at the start of a 108-hole qualifier for the country's bets to the Junior World in San Diego, California, this coming July.

Samsung, PAL and Callaway are major sponsors of the tourney staged by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines in coordination with the Federation of Golf Clubs in the Philippines. The co-sponsors are Titleist, Mizuno, La Jolla, Taylor Made, Wilson, Ping, Auto Magic, Unilever, MMCI Air Liquid, INQUIRER Golf and Michael Guy.

In the girls division, Bambee dela Paz led Class A, Mia Piccio paced Class B with a 75 and Princess Superal was far ahead in Class D after an 85.

Over at the par-54 Riviera executive course, Raymart Tolentino (64) and Mia Legaspi (67) forged ahead in Class E while Shailesh Vasandani (58) and Chloe Reyes (82) were on top in Class F.

Dela Paz, recent winner of the DHL Open, scored a 77 to open up a four-stroke margin on Philippine Ladies Open titlist Debbie de Villa and Cebu-based Kathleen Uy.

The first round results:

Class A: Boys-Miko Alejandro 72, Allan Guy, Mico Yee 74; Girls-Bambee dela Paz 77, Debbie de Villa, Kathleen Uy 81

Class B (13-14): Girls-Mia Piccio 75, Cyna Rodriguez 76, Regine de Guzman 83

Class D (9-10): Boys-JR Gonzales 69, AR Ramos 76, Miggy Yee 76; Girls-Princess Superal 85

Class E (7-8): Boys-Raymart Tolentino 64, Rupert Saragoza 65, Jelbert Gamolo 66; Girls-Mia Legaspi 67, Rachita Vasandani 69, Bianca Pagdanganan 71

Class (6 under) F: Boys-Shailesh Vasandani 58, Ryan Monsalve 78; Girls-Chloe Reyes 82, Kristine Torralba 87, Asha Mari Nocum 91.

JR GONZALES: Living up to expectations

Uy emerges as star from Shanghai pool

By Marc Anthony Reyes

A SUMMER CLINIC LAUNCHED WHAT is now a promising swimming career for 16-year-old Kendrick Uy.

Lured into the sport after watching her mother take swimming lessons a few summers ago, Uy has become the fastest Filipino swimmer by setting two Philippine short course records in the 100-meter and 200m freestyle in the recent 8th Fina world swimming championships in Shanghai.

He clocked 50.80 seconds in the 100m free, erasing the 14-year-old record of 52.15 set by Leo Najera in Houston.

He finished the race 43rd among 95 entries from around the world.

In the 200m free, he posted 1:55.80 to eclipse the 1:56.42 mark registered by the legendary Eric Buhain in Los Angeles in 1990. Uy placed 42nd among 117 participants.

"I knew from then on that it was the start of something big," said Uy, an incoming freshman at the University of the Philippines, of his superb efforts. "This was not the age-group competitions I used to compete in."

The 6-foot Uy started to get into the national consciousness by shining in all age-group meets from the national juniors to the Palarong Pambansa.

He underscored his potential as a top swimmer when he qualified to join the national team in last year's Southeast Asian Games where he saw action with the RP 4x100-m medley relay team that finished fourth.

KENDRICK UY now holds two Philippine short course records.

"The program we are undertaking has helped us a lot in achieving our potentials," said Uy, who trains twice a day with the rest of the national team at the Lourdes School pool and at the Philsports under national coach Dennis Cordero.

His younger sister, 11-year-old Kimberly, is also gunning for a place in the national junior team after placing second in the RP tryouts for the SEA championships in Indonesia.

Up ahead for Kendrick are stints in the SEA championships in Jakarta in June and the world juniors in Rio de Janeiro in August.

"The exposure we had in Shanghai helped us a lot in boosting our confidence, but I'm sure the Indonesian and hopefully the Brazil meets will give us more," said Uy, who is also aiming for an RP team slot in the Asian Games in December.

Batang Tagaytay battles Laguna-Sta. Rosa today

Game Today *(C.P. Tinga gym)*
4 p.m.—Tagaytay vs Laguna

NORTHERN DIVISION STANDINGS	W	L
Spring-Parañaque	2	1
Batang Tagaytay	1	1
Forward Taguig	1	1
Pangasinan	1	1
Bacchus/Harbour	1	2
Laguna-Sta. Rosa	0	3

TAGUIG CITY—BATANG Tagaytay tackles Laguna-Sta. Rosa today, gunning for its second win and a share of the northern division lead with idle Spring Cooking Oil-Parañaque in the 2006 Guerrero Brandy-NBC national basketball championship at the C.P. Tinga gym here.

The Tagaytay cagers of NBC executive vice president and Mayor Bambol Tolentino are slightly favored over the winless Pistons of Gov. Teresita "Ningning" Lazaro and Sta. Rosa Mayor Joey katindig in the lone match at 4 p.m.

Playmaker Niño Marquez leads Tagaytay, which carries a 1-win, 1-loss record after falling to the Iligan Crusaders in its last game.

The Pistons, down in the cellar at 3-0, pin their hopes on center Val Domingo and old reliables Kemuel Proceso, Mike Nuqui and Tracy Intano.

"We're still looking for the right combination inside the court," said Laguna-Sta. Rosa coach Vic "Rambo" Sanchez. "*Kailangan din naming ma*-solve *ang problema namin na nagko*-collapse *pagdating ng* second half after starting strong."

The tourney is supported by Panasonic, Sulpicio Lines, Nature's Spring Mineral Water, Spring Cooking Oil, Regent Foods, Firefly Lightings, Molten and official cable carrier Prime Channel.

3 share lead in playoff for Chess Olympiad slot

TAGAYTAY CITY—NATIONAL MASTER RODerick Nava downed former two-time Philippine junior titlist NM John Paul Gomez in 49 moves of a Reti Opening yesterday to take the early lead in the six-man playoff for the last slot in the RP Team seeing action in next month's Turin World Chess Olympiad.

The 20-year-old Nava, the reigning Philippine junior champion, made a strong knight to d6 move on the 49th to force an inevitable mate in one of the games held at the Sunflower Hotel.

"He made an error in the opening that's why I was able to gain a good position early," said Nava.

Twelve-year-old whiz kid FM Wesley So missed the winning line against IM Petronio Roca and settled for a draw on the 55th move of a French Defense.

"I miscalculated and missed the winning line," said So, who is eyeing to become the youngest-ever Filipino Olympian.

Mirabeau Maga and NM Rolando Nolte of Baguio City settled for another draw after 45 moves of a French Defense.

In the distaff side, ex-national champion International Master Beverly Mendoza turned back Loreshyl Cuizon in 47 moves of a Caro-Kann Defense to share the lead with Shercila Cua.

Cua ripped Kimberly Jane Cunanan after 56 moves of a Queen's Indian Defense.

Gracing the opening ceremonies were NCFP sec-gen Abraham (Bambol) Tolentino, tournament chair Willie Abalos, spokesperson Dr. Jenny Mayor and NM Cesar Caturla, representing NCFP president Prospero "Butch" Pichay Jr.

The second round pairings at presstime had Roca clashing with Gomez, Nolte facing Naval and So meeting Maga in the men's competition. Cunanan takes on Cuizon and Cua tangles with Mendoza in the women's side. Only one slot is at stake in both divisions. *NM Marlon Bernardino*

Mayol title tiff on Solar

LOCAL FIGHT FANS will be in for a grand treat when Solar Sports channel telecasts live the championship bouts of Filipino stars Rodel Mayol and Malcolm Tuñacao on May 6 straight from the Korakuen Hall in Tokyo, Japan. The deal was firmed up earlier between top executives of Solar Sports and Yasuo Matsuoka, the manager of both Mayol and Tunacao. The undefeated Mayol (22-0, 17 KOs), who is ranked No. 1 minimumweight by the WBC, will challenge WBC minimumweight kingpin Eagle Kyowa (15-1, 6 KOs) in the main event of a card being put up by the Kadoebi Jewel Promotions. The Mayol-Kyowa showdown is being touted as one of the most explosive and exciting matchups between small men in recent years with experts divided on who will prevail. While many favor Kyowa owing to his vast championship experience, Mayol is also a heavy pick due to his superior power and skills. *Salven Lagumbay*

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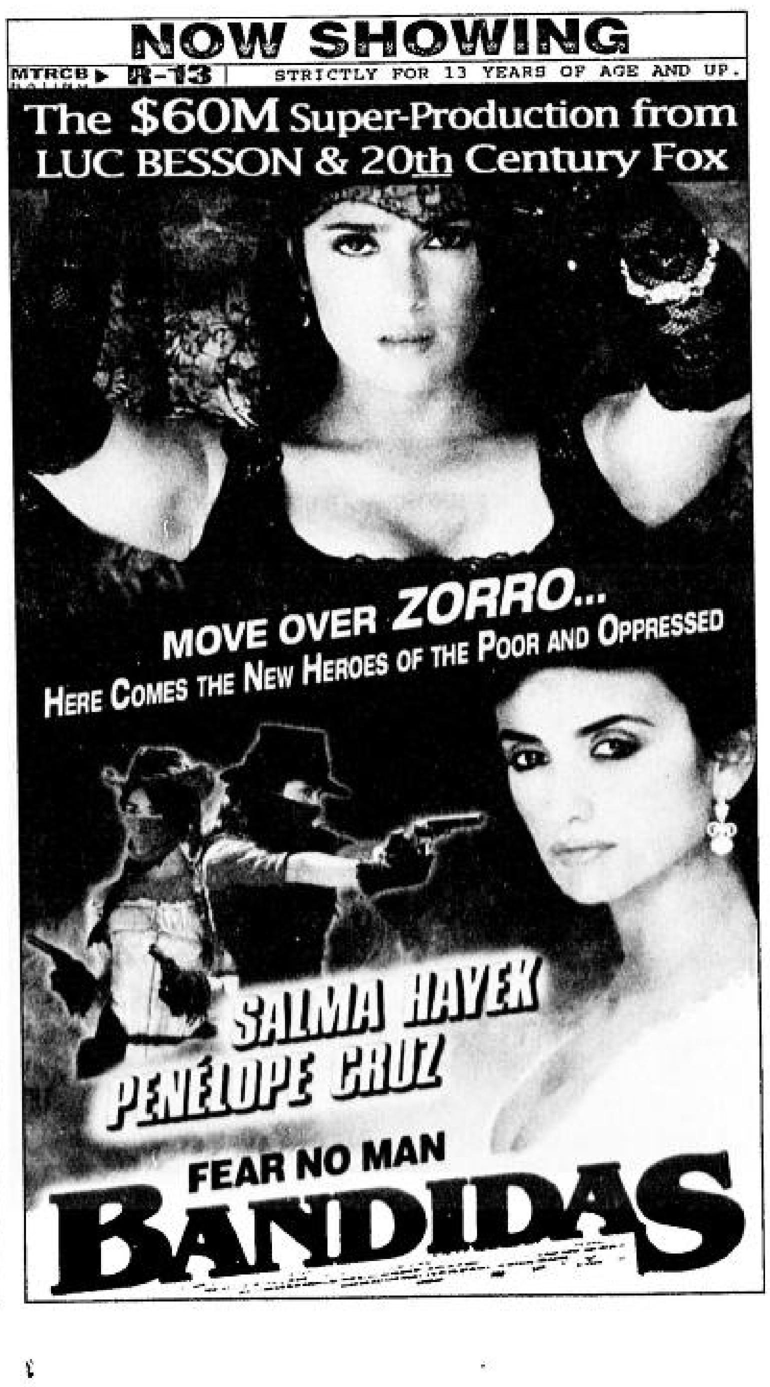

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He wants to Rex you up

FIL-AM comedian Rex Navarrete stars in a new weekly program produced by MTV Philippines.

PHOTOS BY RYAN LIM

By Oliver M. Pulumbarit
Contributor

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

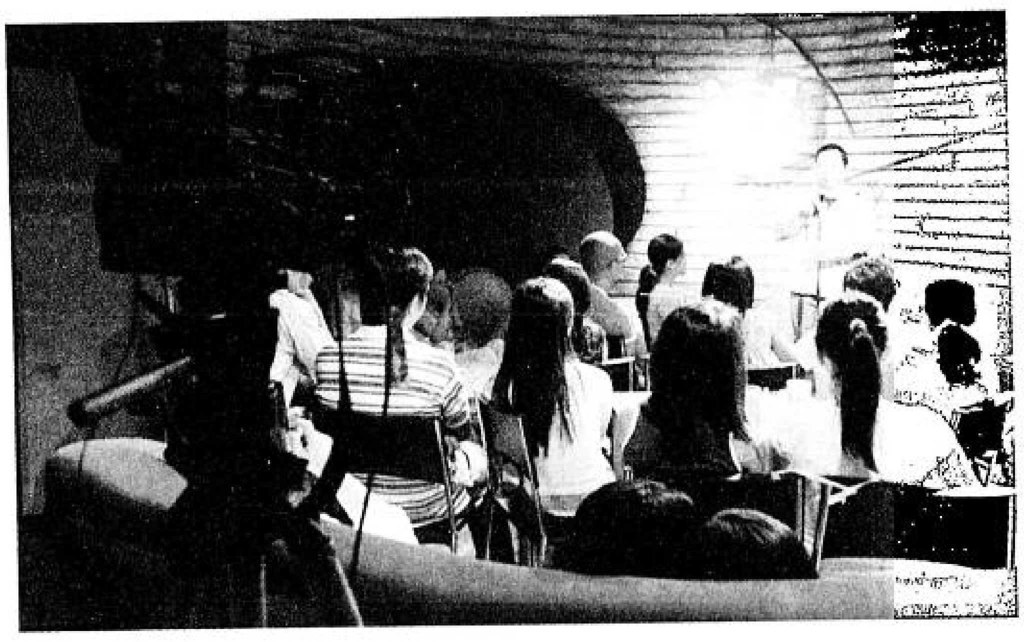
BETWEEN TAKES OF MTV PHILIPpines' new weekly program, "Rex in the City," Fil-Am stand-up comic Rex Navarrete speaks enthusiastically to his studio audience. "There's the magic of editing," he says. "It's not like a live show, where I make a mistake and I die forever!" During one of the short pauses between consistently irreverent jokes about Filipinos and the culture's quirks, he cracks that trying new material is "exhilarating and scary at the same time, like living here!"

Navarrete recently taped two episodes at the Fort Entertainment Center. A brightly lit and chilly comedy club set works as an intimate venue for the mirth-maker to connect with about two dozen audience members. His new material, like his fan-favorite routine "Maritess vs the Superfriends" (in which he pokes fun at American superheroes through a Filipina maid character), still keenly considers anyone and anything fair game, through distinctly Pinoy perspectives.

Originally, the concept was to put him in a man-on-the-street setting and have him interact with different people in various locations. Executive producer Chris Tan explains that the idea didn't translate well: "There were four episodes that we couldn't use. That's about 10 hours of material. Rex wasn't in his element; he wasn't comfortable. He had difficulty talking to people in Filipino. His forte is really stand-up comedy, so that's what we worked with."

The first few episodes of "Rex in the City" are ready. According to associate producer Ton Gatmaitan, "The good thing about Rex is, when it's work, he's there, and he's there on time, even when he's not feeling well. It's inspiring."

Show director Aleah Aliporo agrees that the comic is a generous team player. "He's very open and cooperative. He's naturally funny, so we just put a boom mike for the audience. We don't need a laugh track or canned laughter. Rex and I would like this show eventually compiled on DVD."



How is this weekly show different for you?

It's innovative, a great challenge. It's never been done, so I wanna be part of it. It's my material, but in collaboration with them, so it's a real team effort. It's the first time I've allowed myself to compromise and work with other people's ideas. If it's good stuff and it means something, let it happen here first. MTV is a good platform.

When you're not working, do you run into fans who demand that you say something funny?

Sometimes. "Sample, sample! *Sige na*, make me laugh!" I just walk away, and I say (laughs), "Pay me!"

Do your non-Pinoy listeners get the jokes when you deliver them in a twang-less Filipino accent?

It may sound alien to them, but then [people who] come to my show kinda know enough Filipino culture. Or they bring a friend who can translate for them. So they don't have to miss a beat. In 2004, I went on a European tour. I was, "Are these Germans and Austrians and Swiss people gonna get my stuff?" They did! I had tailored to fit the material I already had, and I just had to edit and choose which one would work.

Growing up, were you always the clown?

No. Well, the clown always gets busted. As the class comedian, I wrote material for the clown. So if he got busted, my stuff was good! As a kid, I had a good sense of humor. I could mimic pretty well, I was pretty creative.

At 17, I started going to my favorite local comedy club in San Francisco, The Punchline (where I work now). I could buy only soda and juice, but I got to see my heroes on stage, just three feet away. They really worked the microphone; they worked the room, worked ideas and stories and became these different characters. They gave me impetus.

As a college student, I gave it a try. It was scary as hell!

> 'I draw the line at anything derogatory to Filipinos. There's enough negative opinion about us around the world'

Have you done a follow-up to "Maritess vs the Superfriends"?

I did a [sequel]. Part of it is on the new DVD, where Maritess now works elsewhere, at the Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters. She thought it was the local Xavier boys' school here at Greenhills. She doesn't know why they're referred to as "gifted" so it's a big mystery. And she starts dating Wolverine! She's a runaway hit! Oh my goodness, I can't control her.

How do you gauge if people will be receptive to your jokes?

I have a collection of writers—in my head. They're like censors, or a focus group. From one extreme, "Oh, you can't do that." The other extreme goes, "You gotta do that!" I have my own system of checks and balances. I think, "How far I can take it?" Or, "Should I take it there?" Or, "What will it mean if I do this?" I don't think of myself as a comic who just doesn't care and lets his mouth run wherever the pieces may fall. People can really become *pikon*!

Has that happened to you?

In 1998, I did a show in Washington D.C. in front of about 900 Filipinos, professionals who worked for the federal government. There were also visiting dignitaries and diplomats. I happened to make a joke about then President Joseph Estrada. They didn't like it and they threw bread at me! Everyone was just mad, and they were like, "Get off the stage! We wanna dance now!" It was really surreal. I was thinking, "I'm not a citizen of the Philippines anymore. I live here now. Let's put some Spam in it! Spice it up!" It was almost a riot.

Where do you draw the line, then?

Anything that's derogatory. If it's gonna be derogatory, there's gotta be a clever way out. I can't just say, "Ahh, Filipinos, you know us—we love to eat dog!" Okay. And then? "That's it!" No, there's gotta be a way out. Otherwise, people will believe that! I think there are enough negative stereotypes about us around the world. I'm not about to add to that.

What advice do you give aspiring comics?

I give them the honest truth: Don't think you're gonna be famous overnight. It takes a lot of humility because you go through a lot of embarrassment in the beginning. The first five years are brutal. Brutal! You're constantly swimming upstream and you get a lot of people throwing water at you. It's tough to be an ethnic comic in America. You really have to start in a strange position.

FEEDBACK

My winner

From Edison David (eddavid92@yahoo.com), Flat 6 226 Iverson Road, London:

I was disappointed when Charrise Pempengco landed in third place on "Little Big Star."

Sam Concepcion's victory sends the wrong signal to hundreds of thousand of young Filipinos around the world. In the previous episodes, judges rationalized Sam's winnings by saying he had star quality. But what, ultimately is star quality? Is talent not an integral part of it?

To Charisse, I'd like to say your talent is amazing. I am sure that, in the future, your star will shine the brightest. I think it is high time that ABS-CBN realize its obligation to viewers and stop camouflaging its profit-raising activities with catchy slogans. Charisse and the whole nation deserve an apology. Shame!

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GP
4 SUBMERGED
1:40, 4:00, 0:20, 8:40, 11:00
R-13

To treaten the illness, other boob-tube booboos

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

HOST: What's the news in Hollywood these days?

Co-host: One of the most unusual news items is about a sculpture made of Britney Spears giving birth on a bear skin of rug.

(A bear skin of rug? What's that?)

***

Host: What is your group offering this summer?

Guest: We are holding an art workshop for children 47 years old.

(That's—a bit old for kids, isn't it?)

***

Host: How do we avoid getting sick, especially our children?

Guest: When it comes to getting sick, it's important to act early to treaten the illness, before it becomes worse.

(To treaten the illness?—*Ano yon*?)

***

Host: You have been successful as a model and beauty queen. Do you want to act in the movies and on TV as well?

After all, many have made the shift.

Guest: Well, for myself, it's could be.

(It's that so?)

***

Host: How good are you at dieting?

Guest: I must admit, I want to lose weight, but my weak totally will.

(Come again?)

***

Host: How should a new talent rehearse to become a better actor?

Guest: At home, he should rehearse in a mirror to act in front of himself.

(Hey, that's quite a trick)

***

Host: How do we know if our child wants to become a performer?

Guest: Very early, if he says he likes to sing, that's a hint.

(Hey, that's a big hint)

***

Host: Why do only a few stars have long careers? What do they do that others don't?

Guest: They always remember their dream. *Ang* dream *ay yung* footsteps *nila*.

(Dream? Footsteps?—What are you talking about?)

Modeling workshop

RAMP (Runway and Modeling Perfection) is offering a modeling workshop from April 18 to May 13 at the C3 Events Place in Greenhills. Call 726-5611 or visit www.timebaseproductions.com.

'Empire' on Hallmark

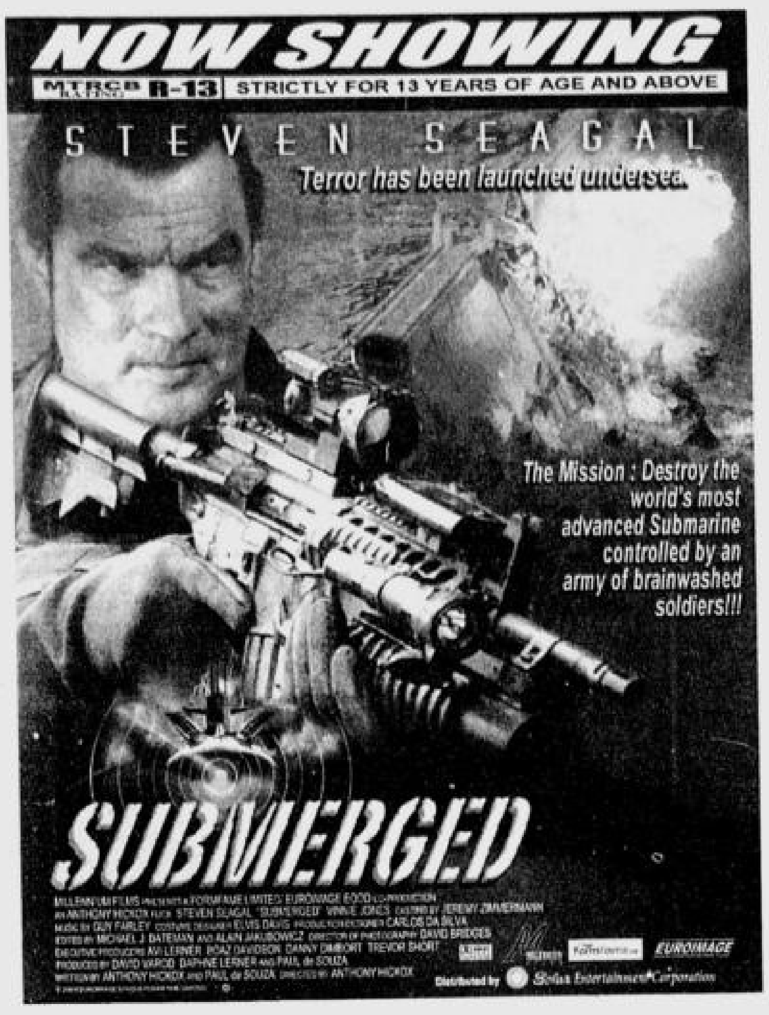
Premiering at 9 p.m. on April 23 on the Hallmark Channel is the sweeping epic, "Empire."

Starring **Jonathan Cake** ("First Knight"), **Santiago Cabrera** ("Haven"), **Dennis Haysbert** ("24") and **Trudie Styler** ("Friends"), the mini-series tells the story of **Octavius, Julius Caesar's** 17-year-old nephew.

Together with all of Rome, he exults in the emperor's homecoming. Unknown to them, however, anger and unrest have been festering within **Caesar's** inner circle of nobles. Only days later, March 15, **Caesar** is killed. **Marc Antony** thinks he's the rightful successor, but **Caesar's** dying wish anoints the impetuous and inexperienced **Octavius** as his heir.

Threatened by **Marc Antony, Octavius** finds an ally in **Tyrannus**, a gladiator sworn to protect him and help him secure the throne.

Parts 1 and 2 of "Empire" will be telecast on April 23 and Part 3 on April 24 at 10 p.m.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③ BANDIDAS
MTRCB: R-13
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(DOLBY) SUBMERGED R13

Filinvest FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DDS) AMERICAN SOLDIERS
2 (SDDS) BASIC INSTINCT 2
3 (DTS) ICE AGE 2
4 GOLD (DTS) TRISTAN & ISOLDE
5 GOLD (DOLBY) SUBMERGED
6 GOLD (SDDS) EIGHT BELOW
7 GOLD (DOLBY) NANNY MCPHEE
8 MOMENTS OF LOVE
9 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
10 D' LUCKY ONES

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City) tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) TRISTAN & ISOLDE
2 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
3 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
4 (DOLBY) SUBMERGED

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart (Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 (DTS) MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
4 ICE AGE 2

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall (Biñan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
3 (DTS) BASIC INSTINCT
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix (Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 (DOLBY) MOMENTS OF LOVE

Cinema 2000 Metrotown (Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 ICE AGE 2
2 ULTRAVIOLET
3 (DOLBY) MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 (DTS) D' LUCKY ONES

Cinema 2000 Waltermart (Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 ICE AGE-2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 (DOLBY) D' LUCKY ONES

Cinema 2000 Waltermart (Gapan)
1 NANNY MC PHEE
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 EIGHT BELOW
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 ICE AGE 2

Blue Wave MARQUINTON
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
2 (DOLBY) D' LUCKY ONES
3 (DOLBY) ICE AGE 2
4 (DOLBY) TRISTAN & ISOLDE

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) TRISTAN & ISOLDE
2 SUBMERGED
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 EIGHT BELOW
5 AMERICAN SOLDIERS

starmall EDSA-SHAW
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 AMERICAN SOLDIERS
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) EIGHT BELOW
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE

MARKETPLACE
Mandaluyong tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 16 BLOCKS
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 RESERVED

metropolis star cinema
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 6433994
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 VENOM
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 D' LUCKY ONES

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 BANDIDAS
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE

THEATRES
NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan, telephone No. (044) 600-3025
1 NANNY MCPHEE
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 D' LUCKY ONES

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue (Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 EIGHT BELOW
2 NANNY MCPHEE

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) EIGHT BELOW
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 (DTS EX) D' LUCKY ONES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

PACIFIC MALL LUCENA CINEMAGIC
Pacific Mall Lucena Tel (042) 660-5271
1 MOMENTS OF LOVE
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE

Lianas Cinema (Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 LUCKY NUMBER SLEVIN
2 ICE AGE 2

Lianas Cinema (Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) JUST FRIENDS
2 MURDER
3 BASIC INSTINCT 2
4 (DTS)

Lianas MovieCity (Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) EIGHT BELOW
2 NENE INOSENTE
3 (DTS) D' LUCKY ONES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 ULTRAVIOLET

Fiesta World Mall (Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 EIGHT BELOW
2 BIG MOMMAS HOUSE 2
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

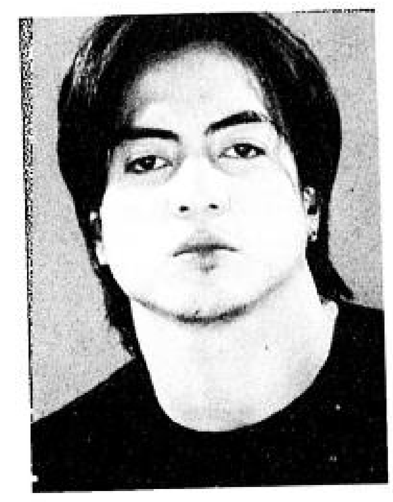
Berma Cinema (Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 MURDER
2 BANDIDAS

MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Ogie Alcasid may play Zsa Zsa Zaturnah instead of Rustom

OGIE ALCASID

RUSTOM PADILLA



WENDELL RAMOS

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Ann Carvajal

RUSTOM PADILLA WAS TAPPED to play the lead role in "Zsa Zsa Zaturnah." Heard that he turned it down because even if he has admitted that he's gay, Rustom has qualms about cross-dressing, which he would have to do in the film. No screaming faggot, this one.

But some quarters say that **Mother Lily** changed her mind about getting Rustom because of his exorbitant asking price—P2.5 million, we heard. So now Regal Films is eyeing **Ogie Alcasid** for the role of Zsa Zsa.

Ogie told us, "Yes, it has been offered to me but there's nothing final yet. I'd love to do it though, even if I wasn't the first choice. Whoever gets the role is blessed."

Such humility! Ogie just came back from Australia where he spent quality time with his wife **Michelle** and their kids during the Holy week break. I asked about the house he's having built in the Land Down Under. He chuckled, "Never mind *na* about the details. *Baka kulitin ako ng* BIR, ha-ha-ha!"

Instead, he talked about his 14th album, "Lumilipad," from Viva Records. "I wrote all the songs except two," he said. "The collection features duets with **Jaya**, **Regine**, **Jinky Vidal**, **Rachelle Ann Go** and **Sarah Geronimo**. It's called "Lumilipad" because that's the feeling you get when you're in love!"

And in Ogie's case, love really makes him fly to Australia every so often.

Aha, flirting!

ACCORDING to an eyewitness, **Wendell Ramos** was flirting with "StarStruck Avenger" **Vaness del Moral** during the taping of "Bubble Gang's" summer special in Baguio and Batangas. The pretty young thing seemed to enjoy the attention, our spy said. But is it true that GMA Artist Center reprimanded Vaness for cavorting with Wendell, since she's underage? But shouldn't they warn Wendell instead 'cause he's the one making the moves? What Vaness resists will persist?

Guess who this young actor is who looks so wholesome, you wouldn't even guess he's hooked on drugs and alcohol. He secretly reconciled and then parted ways again with his actress/host girlfriend. When they got back together, he gave up drugs. Now that she has a new beau, the actor is doing drugs again. Does getting junked by his girl give him the license to be a junkie? Will the people around this squeaky clean-looking actor squeak up?

CLUE: The actor is half of a popular love team and has a very common name.

'PBB' teens

PREPARATIONS for "Pinoy Big Brother Teen Edition" are underway. Twelve teenagers will be launched as "housemates" during a program in front of Big Brother's house on April 23. They will be "under house arrest" till June 3. The Celebrity Edition had a "Back to Nature" theme. I wonder what the teen edition's gimmick will be? "Simmer in Summer"? "In the Heat of Competition"? Perhaps PBB Teen Edition should get an aspirin brand for a major sponsor. For sure Big Brother will be needing extra doses of analgesic for the headaches that teenagers naturally cause.

Beauty seminar

EVER wondered how the **Fanny Serrano** became makeup artist to the stars? He shares his trade secrets in a seminar workshop on April 17, 19 and 20, at the Fanny Serrano Salon, #69 Scout Rallos St, QC. Call 925-52-51 or 925-52-53.

Job fair

ADDRESSING the steady increase in the country's unemployment rate, Scribbleworks Productions has created a tele-magazine show titled "Jobs TV" on Studio 23. Host Ria Trillo gives the lowdown on everything needed to live in the "real" world. The program helps both youths and adults in empowering their future by making the right choices in career paths. For the employed, it will help make easier the process of climbing up the corporate ladder.

Catch "Jobs TV" Saturdays, 10 to 10:30 a.m.

(E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.)

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CINEMA 1 AMERICAN SOLDIER
11:40, 1:55, 4:05, 6:15, 8:25, 10:30
R13

CINEMA 2 SUBMERGED
10:30, 12:50, 3:15, 5:40, 8:05, 10:30
PG13

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND EX

PROMENADE
GREENHILLS
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NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 3 ICE AGE 2
11:00, 1:15, 3:30, 5:45, 8:00, 10:20
GP

CINEMA 4 EIGHT BELOW
11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00
GP

CINEMA 5 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
11:00, 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 10:00
R13

TICKET PRICES & SCREENING TIME SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR CINEMA INQUIRIES, CALL: 722 4496.

MUSIC MUSEUM

APRIL 26, 2006	FREESTYLE & POPS FERNANDEZ	8:00PM
APRIL 27 & 28, 2006	WILLIE NEPOMUCENO	8:00PM

TEATRINO
PROMENADE GREENHILLS

EVERY MONDAY APRIL 27, 28, 29, 2006	TEATRINO DANCE NIGHT WERE STILL HOT "THE MUSICAL" FOR INQUIRIES CALL 722-4532 LOC. 116	7:00PM 9:00PM

FOR INQUIRIES & RESERVATION, PLS. CALL : 721-6726 OR 721-0635

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PENÉLOPE CRUZ
FEAR NO MAN
BANDIDAS

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AT THE CINEMAS
THX
Reserve your tickets by texting SURESEATS GB3 or SURESEATS G4 to 2333 (Globe) or 211 (Smart) or log on to www.sureseats.com for web reservations.
Movie schedules may change without prior notice. For verification, please call 729 7777

G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 D' LUCKY ONES	2 EIGHT BELOW	3 SUBMERGED	4 MOMENTS OF LOVE			
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 D' LUCKY ONES	2 AMERICAN SOLDIERS	3 THX TRISTAN & ISOLDE 1:00, 3:30, 6:00, 8:30, 11:00 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 JUST FRIENDS	5 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN	6 EIGHT BELOW	7 SUBMERGED
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 EIGHT BELOW	2 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX RENT 1:15, 3:45, 6:15, 8:45, 11:15 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	3 THE HILLS HAVE EYES 1:50, 4:00, 6:10, 8:20, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 EIGHT BELOW 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30, 12:00 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 TRISTAN & ISOLDE 2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30, 12:00 GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX EIGHT BELOW	2 AMERICAN SOLDIERS	3 TRISTAN & ISOLDE	4 D' LUCKY ONES	5 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 EIGHT BELOW	2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE	3 SHE'S THE MAN	4 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN			
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	1 D' LUCKY ONES	2 SUBMERGED	3 TRISTAN & ISOLDE	4 EIGHT BELOW	5 ICE AGE 2: THE MELTDOWN		

At the Activity Center
Customer Service text hotline: 0917 6095900
Customer Service Numbers: Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm
Greenbelt - 752 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center - 842 2782; from 10am to 8pm
Ayala Center Cebu - (032) 231 5342 loc 324
Market! Market! - 886 7519

GLORIETTA	ALABANG TOWN CENTER
Easter Bunny Special by Repertory Philippines April 16, 2006	Easter Fun at Town April 16, 2006
AYALA CENTER CEBU	MARKET! MARKET!
Ayala Center Cebu's Easter Event & Kiddo's 1st Year Anniversary April 16, 2006	Cartoon Network Summer Camp April 22, 2006

GREENBELT
Bossa Nova with SITTI
April 19, 2006

Greenbelt Onstage
Repertory Philippines presents TWO & TWO MAKE SEX
at REP's Globe Theater - April 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, May 5, 6 & 7
For inquiries, pls. call 887-0710

Ayala MUSEUM
Registration is now ongoing for Ayala Museum's
Summer Art Festival Workshop 2006
For inquiries, please call 757-7117 to 21 loc 29 or visit www.ayalamuseum.org

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(525,600 minutes)
How do you measure a year?"
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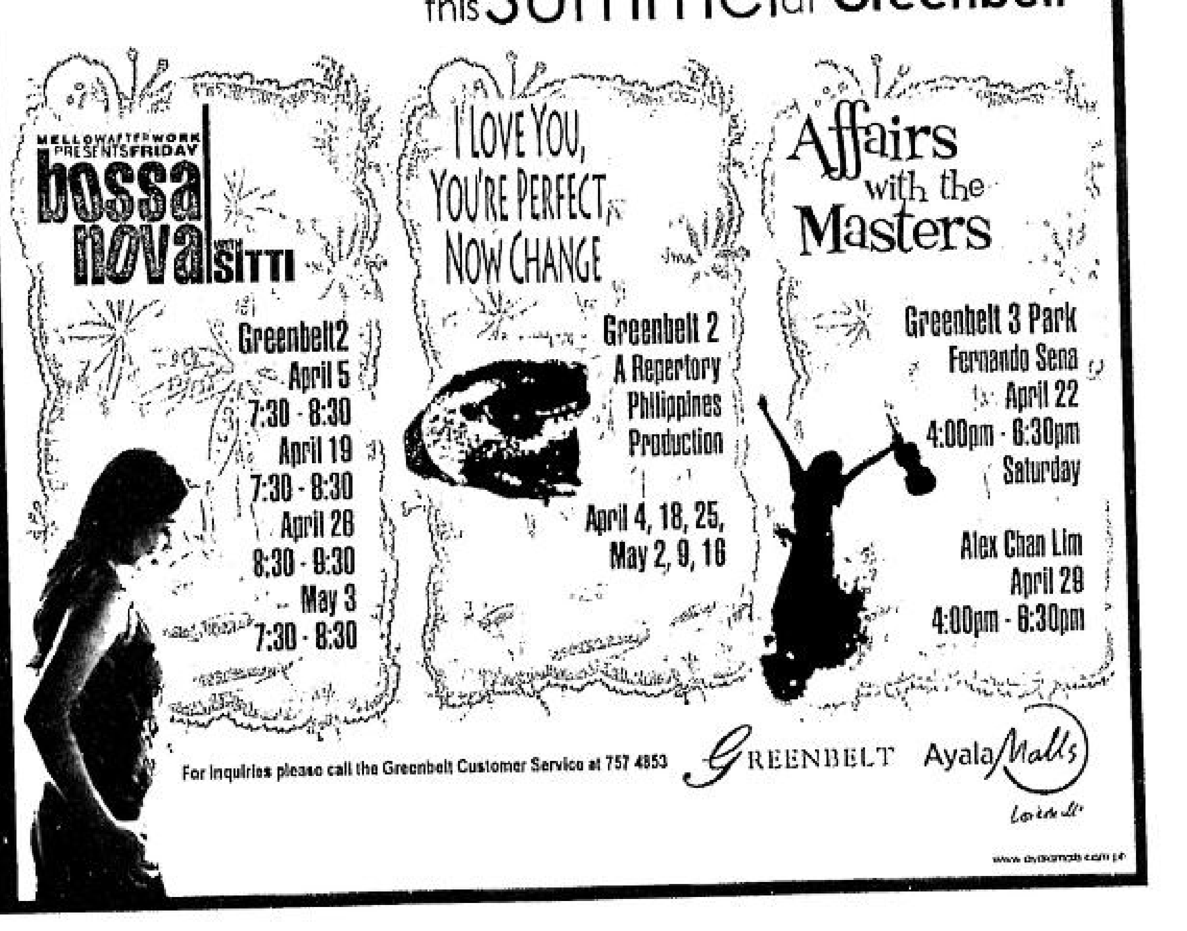
"TWO THUMBS UP."
--- Ebert & Roeper

"MUST SEE FILM OF THE YEAR!"
--- Paul Clinton, CNN

MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13

COLUMBIA PICTURES
Ayala Malls



Affairs to Remember this Summer at Greenbelt

MELLOW AFTER WORK PRESENTS FRIDAY bossa nova with SITTI
Greenbelt2
April 5
7:30 - 8:30
April 19
7:30 - 8:30
April 26
8:30 - 9:30
May 3
7:30 - 8:30

I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Greenbelt 2
A Repertory Philippines Production
April 4, 18, 25,
May 2, 9, 16

Affairs with the Masters
Greenbelt 3 Park
Fernando Sena
April 22
4:00pm - 6:30pm
Saturday
Alex Chan Lim
April 29
4:00pm - 6:30pm

For inquiries please call the Greenbelt Customer Service at 757 4853
GREENBELT Ayala Malls
www.ayalamalls.com.ph

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

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MOVIES/SCHEDULES/PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA 632-9116

1 BASIC INSTINCT • THX
2 ICE AGE 2
3 SUBMERGED
4 EIGHT BELOW
5 D' LUCKY ONES
6 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
7 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
8 MOMENTS OF LOVE
9 BANDIDAS
10 AMERICAN SOLDIER

ERMITA 636-7809 to 12

1 ICE AGE 2
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 AMERICAN SOLDIER
4 SUBMERGED
5 EIGHT BELOW
6 D' LUCKY ONES
7 TRSITAN AND ISOLDE

METRO EAST 682-8193 / 682-8199

1 BASIC INSTINCT 2
2 ICE AGE 2
3 THE HILLS HAVE EYES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 AMERICAN SOLDIER
6 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
7 EIGHT BELOW
8 D' LUCKY ONES

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3228-30

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
4 ICE AGE 2
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 BASIC INSTINCT

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2676

1 D' LUCKY ONES
2 MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-6378

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 SUBMERGED
4 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE

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STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 NANNY MCPHEE
4 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
5 ICE AGE 2

DASMARIÑAS (046) 862-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
3 D' LUCKY ONES
4 BASIC INSTINCT 2

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 BASIC INSTINCT 2
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
5 TRISTAN AND ISOLDE
6 EIGHT BELOW

BACOLOD (034) 441-0463 (034) 441-0459

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 NANNY MCPHEE
4 ULTRAVIOLET
5 ICE AGE 2
6 SHE'S THE MAN

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D' LUCKY ONES
3 NANNY MCPHEE
4 SHE'S THE MAN

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APRIL 21, 2006
FRIDAY • 8:30 PM
SM MEGAMALL
CINEMA 9
Tickets at (P180, P280, P380)

Basil Valdez Ngayon at Kailanman

APRIL 22, 2006
SATURDAY • 8:30 PM
SM MEGAMALL
CINEMA 3
Tickets at (P600, P800, P1200)

Tickets available at TICKETWORLD 891-5610/ 891-9999

METRO MANILA

PODIUM

CINEMA 1
ICE AGE 2

CINEMA 2
EIGHT BELOW

SM MEGACINEMA

EIGHT BELOW
SUBMERGED
ICE AGE 2
RESERVED
AMERICAN SOLDIERS
BANDIDAS
JUST FRIENDS
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
MOMENTS OF LOVE
D LUCKY ONES
FINAL DESTINATION 3
SHE'S THE MAN

SM CITY NORTH EDSA

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D LUCKY ONES
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2
5 AMERICAN SOLDIERS
6 BANDIDAS
7 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
8 SUBMERGED

SM CITY DASMARINAS

1 THE LUCKY ONES
2 ICE AGE 2
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 TRISTAN & ISOLDE

SM CITY FAIRVIEW

TRISTAN & ISOLDE
ULTRAVIOLET
FINAL DESTINATION 3
BANDIDAS
D LUCKY ONES
EIGHT BELOW
SUBMERGED
MOMENTS OF LOVE
ICE AGE 2
VENOM
CHINESE TALL STORY
AMERICAN SOLDIERS

SM CITY STA. MESA

ICE AGE 2
SUBMERGED
EIGHT BELOW
BANDIDAS
D LUCKY ONES
VENOM
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
JUST FRIENDS
MOMENTS OF LOVE
AMERICAN SOLDIERS

SM CITY BICUTAN

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 D LUCKY ONESE
3 MOMENTS OF LOVE
4 ICE AGE 2

SM CITY SAN LAZARO

1 ICE AGE 2
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 EIGHT BELOW
4 AMERICAN SOLDIERS
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 D LUCKY ONES

SM CITY MANILA

1 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
2 SUBMERGED
3 BANDIDAS
4 ICE AGE 2
5 SHE'S THE MAN
EIGHT BELOW
AMERICAN SOLDIERS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
MOMENTS OF LOVE
VENOM
JUST FRIENDS
D LUCKY ONES

SM CITY SOUTHMALL

ICE AGE 2
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 EIGHT BELOW
SUBMERGED
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
6 D LUCKY ONES
AMERICAN SOLDIERS
VENOM
BANDIDAS

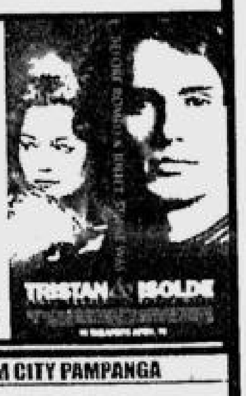
SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA

D LUCKY ONES
MOMENTS OF LOVE
EIGHT BELOW
ICE AGE 2

SM CITY SUCAT

ICE AGE 2
2 EIGHT BELOW
3 D LUCKY ONES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE

TRISTAN & ISOLDE



Watch James Franco and Sophia Myles in an enchanting love story between two people of worlds apart and on how they kept their promise to be with each other forever.

NOW SHOWING

LUZON

SM CITY BAGUIO

ULTRAVIOLET
D LUCKY ONES
ICE AGE 2
EIGHT BELOW

SM CITY MARILAO

EIGHT BELOW
ICE AGE 2
D LUCKY ONES
MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY BATANGAS

EIGHT BELOW
D LUCKY ONES
ICE AGE 2
BANDIDAS

SM CITY BACOOR

FINAL DESTINATION 3
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
ICE AGE 2
MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 EIGHT BELOW
6 D LUCKY ONES
CHINESE TALL STORY
8 AMERICAN SOLDIERS

SM CITY STA. ROSA

EIGHT BELOW
ICE AGE 2
MOMENTS OF LOVE
D LUCKY ONES

SM CITY PAMPANGA

1 EIGHT BELOW
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 ICE AGE 2
5 D LUCKY ONES
MOMENTS OF LOVE

SM CITY LUCENA

FINAL DESTINATION 3
ICE AGE 2
TRISTAN & ISOLDE
D LUCKY ONES

SM CITY MOLINO

D LUCKY ONES
MOMENTS OF LOVE
3 ICE AGE 2
4 EIGHT BELOW

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU

1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 TRISTAN & ISOLDE
3 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
4 EIGHT BELOW
5 ICE AGE 2
SHE'S THE MAN
D LUCKY ONES
FINAL DESTINATION 3

SM CITY ILOILO

1 SHE'S THE MAN
2 RESERVED
3 D LUCKY ONES
4 ICE AGE 2
5 MOMENTS OF LOVE
NANNY McPHEE
RESERVED
8 EIGHT BELOW

SM CITY DAVAO

EIGHT BELOW
2 NORTH COUNTRY
3 D LUCKY ONES
4 MOMENTS OF LOVE
5 ICE AGE 2
6 ULTRAVIOLET

SM CITY CAGAYAN

EIGHT BELOW
2 D LUCKY ONES
3 ICE AGE 2
4 V FOR VENDETTA

SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MOVIE LISTING MTRCB RATING SCREENING SCHEDULES AND THE LATEST HAPPENINGS AT SM CINEMA

PAROKYA ni Edgar

SHOW TIME

RX cookout

ON APRIL 22, RX 93.1 brings back its signature summer event, "The RX Summer Cookout," this time as a summer excursion. "Cookout 2006" will be an all-day affair to be held at Golden Sunset in Calatagan, Batangas, with Parokya ni Edgar as featured performer.

Today

Strings of Soul and MYMP at Tavern on the Square, Greenbelt 3

Aretha and the Souled Out Band at Merk's

Tomorrow

Moontrucks at RJ Guitar Bar, Jupiter Street, Makati

Dimsum at Tavern on the Square, Greenbelt 3

April 20

Abrakadabra at RJ Guitar Bar, Jupiter Street, Makati

Mocha at Tavern on the Square, Greenbelt 3

Acoustic Jive at Merk's

April 21

Winston in Concert, featuring True Faith and The Dawn at Party Place in San Fernando, Pampanga

RJ 'n Friends with the Members Band at RJ Guitar Bar, Jupiter Street, Makati

9th Avenue at Tavern on the Square, Greenbelt 3

April 22

True Faith and The Dawn at Cal Jam in Olongapo City

Kamikazee at Starmall Edsa; 4 p.m.

Mr. God and Company at RJ Guitar Bar, Jupiter Street, Makati

Tribe of Levi at Tavern on the Square, Greenbelt 3

Flintstones and the Gang at Merk's

April 23

Katrina Halili at Metropolis Star Alabang; 4 p.m.

AiAi Delas Alas' Maggi Magic Sarap Palengke Tour at Naga Public Market

April 24

Michael Terry at RJ Guitar Bar, Jupiter Street, Makati

Strings of Soul and Michaelangelo at Tavern on the Square, Greenbelt 3

April 25

Michael Terry at RJ Guitar Bar, Jupiter Street, Makati

Brown Republic at Tavern on the Square, Greenbelt 3

Aretha and the Souled Out Band at Merk's

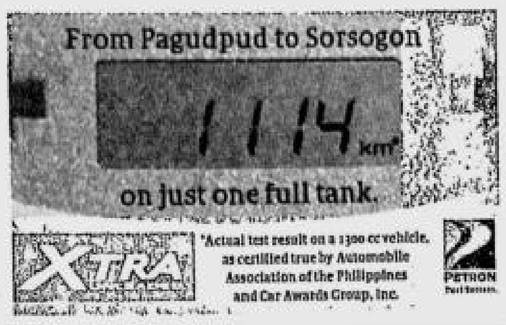
April 26

Moontrucks at RJ Guitar Bar, Jupiter Street, Makati

Dimsum at Tavern on the Square, Greenbelt 3

April 27

Abrakadabra at RJ Guitar Bar, Jupiter Street, Makati



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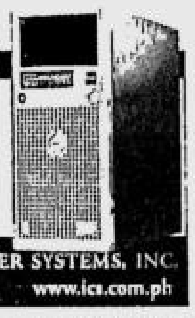
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91-day T-bill rate nears 4-year low

Yields of 6-month, 1-year treasuries also fall sharply

By Michelle V. Remo

TREASURY BILL RATES dropped across all maturities yesterday, with the 91-day yield falling near four-year lows as banks remained awash with cash in a market facing a shortage of government securities.

The bellwether 91-day bills fetched 4.6 percent, or 39.3 basis points lower than the rate at the last auction two weeks ago and the lowest since May 27, 2002. (One percentage point is equivalent to 100 basis points.)

The three-month government securities were over-subscribed, with tenders amounting to P3.06 billion compared with the government's offering of only P1 billion per maturity.

"We reached a point when investors start panicking and the issuer (government) becomes cool. This phenomenon is brought by declining (budget) deficits, reduced borrowings and retirement of debts," National Treasurer Omar Cruz told reporters in a briefing after yesterday's auctions.

91-DAY/B2

WHAT'S INSIDE

Gold shares soar /B2
Loans extended by commercial banks up 2.4% /B3

SMC profit up slightly in '05

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FOOD AND BEVERAGE CONGLOMERATE San Miguel Corp. posted a slight 1.9-percent increase in consolidated net income in 2005 to P9.03 billion from P8.86 billion the year before, financial statements filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission showed.

This was lower than SMC's earlier estimate of a 3-percent growth in net earnings to P9.15 billion.

Including the net income of minority interests or companies in which SMC owns more than 50 percent but less than 100 percent, net income would have dipped 10 percent to P8.97 billion in 2005 from the P9.99-billion restated net income in 2004.

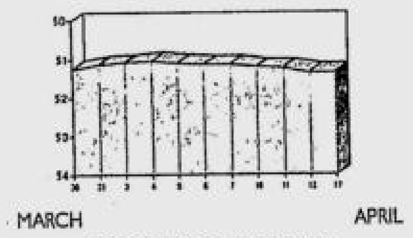
SMC noted that its consolidated net income included financing charges of P6.89 billion. Excluding these one-time costs related to the purchase of Australian dairy giant National Foods Ltd., net income would have increased by 8 percent.

Total interest expense and financing

SMC/B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 51.34 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., April 17, 2006

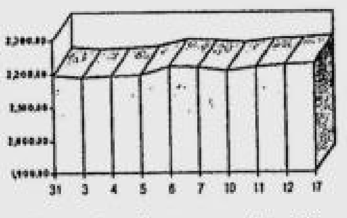
¥ 118.23 = $ 1

As of 5 p.m., April 17, 2006

GOLD: $596.50-597.00

per ounce Hong Kong, April 12, 2006

STOCK MARKET



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks near 6-year high

SHARE PRICES ROSE 0.24 PERcent to near six-year highs yesterday as investors bought into companies expected to post strong first-quarter results, dealers said.

They said miners extended gains as prices of gold and other metals continued firmer, with the underlying tone positive despite concerns over tensions between the United States and Iran.

The composite index added 5.39 points to 2,229.36 after trading between 2,218.68 and 2,231.38. It was the best finish since Aug. 26, 1999, when it ended at 2,236.71.

Gainers led losers 58 to 30, with 55 stocks unchanged.

Volume was 7.02 billion shares worth P1.16 billion.

"The market has been moving up quite steadily, supported by expectations of better corporate results," said Oliver Plana of Asiasec Equities.

Company results for the three months to March are expected to be released starting later this month.

"While corrections happen along the way, the overall direction is on the uptrend," Plana said.

Based on technical factors, Jonathan Ravelas of Banco de Oro said last week's close above 2,220 points implies a further test of 2,250 and any correction may be limited to 2,170.

Manila Mining A-shares, exclusive to Filipinos, rose 0.3 centavo to 2.9 centavos. Its B-shares, which foreign investors can buy, rose 0.2 centavo to 3.4 centavos.

Lepanto Consolidated Mining A-shares climbed six centavos to 41 centavos and its B shares gained six centavos to 43 centavos.

AFP

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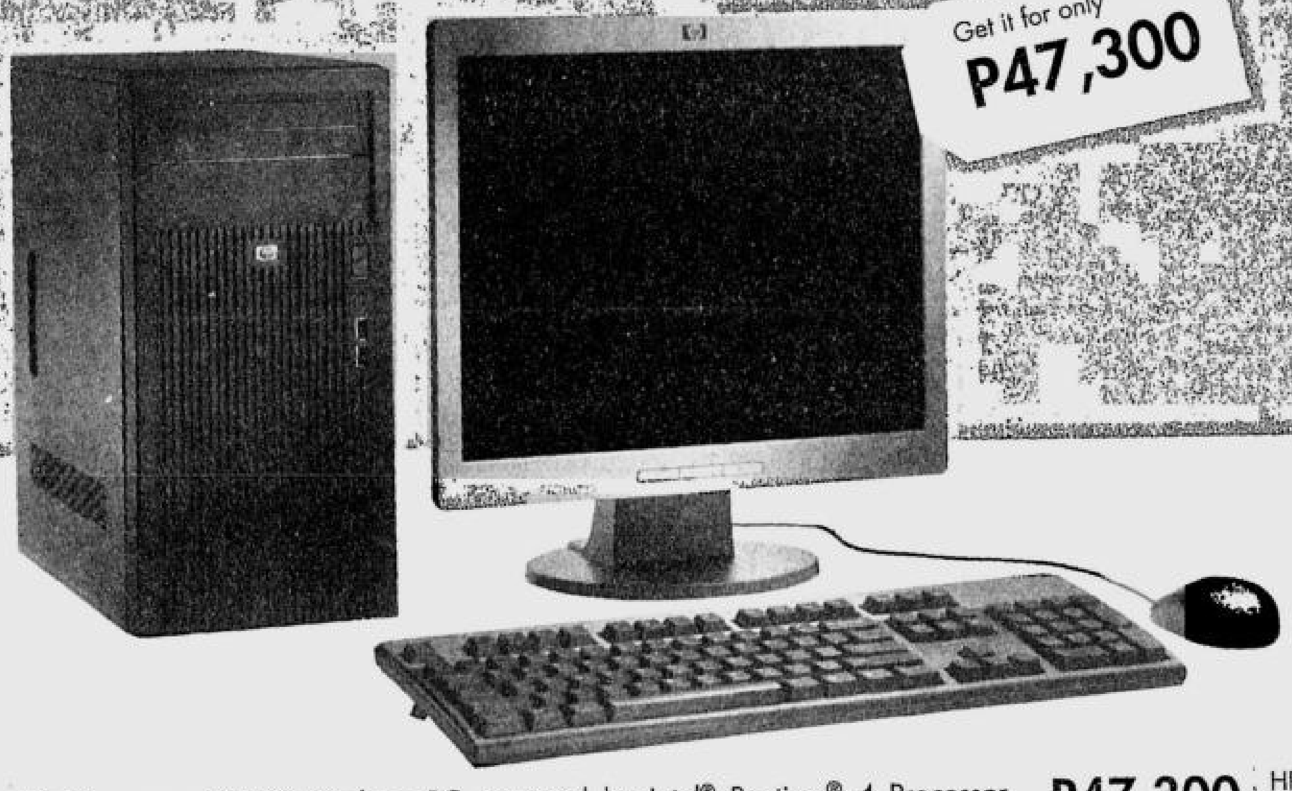
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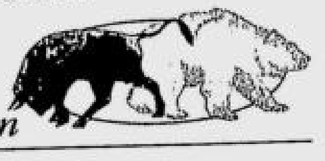
Gold shares soar

MR. BEARBULL



Ron Nathan

WE HAVE JUST RETURNED FROM A VACATION in Singapore and if there is such as place as Utopia, (a perfect country), then Singapore is it. A tiny dot on the map, it has a population of only 4 million people. It is so small that the city and the country are one and the same. Expanding on reclaimed land, it just grows and grows and is now a major Asian financial center.

When the British gave the country its freedom from colonial rule in 1959, Lee Kwan Yew inherited a small nation of Chinese, Malays, Indians and Eurasians. The island had no natural resources and its chances of survival looked pretty slim. The first act he decreed as Prime Minister was to abolish all forms of discrimination so that everyone became Singaporeans.

The first language is English, taught in school from kindergarten and used in all forms of communication. Each ethnic group continued to study its own language, Mandarin, Malay and Hindi and worshipped as Buddhists, Moslems and Hindus. So everybody kept his identity but was first and foremost, a Singaporean.

Candidates from the People's Action Party (PAP) were chosen to form a parliament, based solely on merit and irrespective of race and religion. They were paid a high salary to attract leaders of industry, doctors, lawyers etc., but absolutely no corruption was allowed. The Prime Minister had his own special agents, who had the power to enter any minister or candidate's home in the middle of the night and search their bank accounts. Anyone found guilty of "special deals" was dealt with severely.

The government was very strict. The penalty for smuggling hard drugs such as heroin was death by hanging and it is still mandatory. Only recently, an Australian was hanged. The death penalty also applies to murder 1, kidnapping and carrying unauthorized firearms in the execution of a crime. For rape, the penalty is 7 years in jail plus corporal punishment. Needless to say, Singapore is a very safe place.

According to Lee Kwan Yew, in a speech last year, the average Singaporean earns 3,000 Singapore dollars a month, equal to P100,000. This is tax-free but 6 percent is deducted for Medisave, as in the UK, and 20 percent is held until retirement at 62, soon to be raised to 65. The employer also puts in 13 percent so when a person retires, he has a sizeable nest egg, which takes the place of a pension.

Due to lack of space, almost everybody lives in a high rise condominium. When people marry, they are encouraged to put down a 20-percent deposit (the parents usually help) and they take out a 20-year mortgage at a fixed rate of only 2.5 percent. Ninety percent of all the inhabitants own their property but the 10 percent that do not wish to can rent at a subsidized rate.

Prices are considerably higher than in the Philippines so most husbands and wives go to work. This is causing the government a serious problem because the birth rate is too low and the country is rapidly aging. Incentives are now being planned to encourage women to have more children. Child allowances will be paid and probably day-care will be provided, as in Japan, where they have same problem. The standard of living is second only to Japan, a position once held by the Philippines.

The city is beautifully designed and every street has trees along at least one side, plus greenery and flowers. There are 150 shopping malls but my wife only visited 148 of them. They are interconnected underground so that you can go from one to another without exposing yourself to the intense heat and humidity. There are also 3 markets, Chinatown, Little India and Arab Street. I went to the Mustafa Center, where I was told I mustafa curry.

Singapore is so clean. Nobody throws litter on the pavement, nobody spits or urinates in the street. People only cross at traffic lights and pedestrian crossings. Taxis travel at precisely 30 miles an hour as indicated and there are no traffic jams, as computers control the lights. There are fixed-fare hop-on, hop-off buses, which traverse the city, plus the MRT.

One of the main attractions of Singapore is the food, Chinese, Indian, Malaysian and every other nationality. There are thousands of restaurants, ranging from very expensive to the numerous street vendors. A popular dish is SATAY, which we tried and found most sataysfying.

There is a beautiful island called SENTOSA, reached by going up 1,000 ft to the top of Mount FABER and taking the cable car. I had to give my wife Valium and ketamine. They have an incredible aquarium, which you view from an underground tunnel, with thousands of fish on both sides and above. There was also a dolphin show and a musical fountain with laser beams. No wonder they have 11 million tourists a year and this will increase because they are going to build a $3.5-billion Las Vegas casino.

* * *

WHILE we were away, I was unable to follow the local stock market, as no newspaper or television ever mentions it. The Straits Times is a huge newspaper with many sections. It carried graphs of 8 Asian markets daily and news of each in detail but the Philippines was never mentioned. So when I got back and heard that Philex has touched P3.95 before closing at P3.80, I was astonished.

Six weeks ago, I instructed my subscribers to BUY PX at P1.64 using block capitals and bold type in my newsletter for emphasis. I said you can put all your money into it and many did just that. Depending on what the market does on Monday, I might advise selling half, leaving the other half at less than zero cost. What a nice position to be in. Others might prefer to await the analyst briefing later this month.

I am now looking at the top end of my P1.6-P2 billion projection because copper has just made yet another new high and gold is trading around $600 an ounce. On a short-term view, a correction would be healthy: On a 1-year view, I stick with my top-of-the-range target of P5.60. *mrbearbull@hotmail.com*

Highlands Prime profit up 37%

HIGHLANDS PRIME INC., A LISTED HIGH-end property development company majority owned by the SM Group, posted P173 million in net income after taxes in 2005.

The 2005 profit was 37 percent higher than the previous year's P126 million.

Revenues were derived from the sale of The Woodridge, and The Horizon condominium units and Lakeview Heights subdivision lots in Tagaytay Highlands and Tagaytay Midlands.

The success of its Woodridge project prompted the company to fast-track the development and sale of The Horizon at Tagaytay Midlands and The Woodridge Park at Tagaytay Highlands. The Horizon, a mid-rise residential condominium development envisioned to be a golfer's haven, is projected to generate P2 billion in revenue for HPL. Its four-bedroom units with an average floor area of 150 square meters boast of views of the Midlands golf course, Taal Lake and volcano. The first phase or 108 units of The Horizon is scheduled for completion by the third quarter of this year.

The Woodridge Park started site development in the first quarter of 2006. This development, adjacent to the existing Woodridge, will feature two to four bedroom units (170 to 280 sq m) and a few loft-units. The project is forecast to generate P1.8 billion in revenue for a total of 119 units. The first phase or 65 units of the Woodridge Park is targeted for completion by end-2007.

SMC profit up slightly in '05

From page B1

charges swelled to P11.82 billion in 2005, from P3.6 billion in 2004.

SMC said energy and raw material costs last year were at record highs, putting pressure on profit margins. Consumer demand was also soft compared with the previous years as share of utilities spending rose as a percentage of household incomes.

However, SMC said its consolidated financial results showed its resilience due to brand franchise, diverse product range, geographic reach and cost curbing initiatives. It said consolidated revenues grew 30 percent to P226.7 billion in 2005 due to the inclusion of National Foods and the full-year contribution of Australian juice maker Berri Ltd., one of beer-based giant's key acquisitions.

In a separate financial report, San Miguel Pure Foods Co. reported that its net income grew 80 percent last year due to higher volumes and the strong rebound in poultry and feeds businesses as well as its flour operations. Share of equity holders in the net income surged by 96 percent. Specific figures have yet to be disclosed.

San Miguel Properties also reported that its net income grew 17 percent to P299 million last year from P255 million in 2004 due to the sale of a portion of its General Trias property to Purefoods-Hormel Co. Inc.

91-day …

From page B1

The 182-day bill yield settled at 5.499 percent, 24.2 basis points lower than the previous level, while the 364-day rate declined by 40 basis points to 6.09 percent.

The six-month and the one-year securities were also over-subscribed as tenders reached P5.91 billion and P8.34 billion.

The auction results defied market forecasts. Cruz said government securities investors had expected the 91-day rate to rise by 2 basis points, while the six-month and one-year yields would decline by just between 10 and 20 basis points.

The Bureau of the Treasury's auction committee accepted a total of P3 billion worth of bids, raising its programmed borrowing yesterday.

Earlier, the Department of Finance said the national government's budget deficit for the first quarter was expected to be better than the programmed P71.8 billion. The deficit figure will be officially announced tomorrow.

Last year, the deficit stood at P146.8 billion, much better than the ceiling of P180 billion officially set by fiscal authorities.

Cruz said the government's improving fiscal position allowed the Treasury to trim down its borrowing requirements. Treasury auctions have been made less frequent, from the previous weekly to fortnightly.

He added that the declining deficit had a compounded positive effect on the debt burden of the government as it reduces the need for borrowings and at the same time helps lower interest rates on debts.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of April 17, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	6,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	34.5	35	34.5	34.5	318,600
Bank of the Phil. Islands	60.5	61	60	61	523,800
China Banking Corp.	750	760	750	760	530
Citystate Savings Bank	19.75	19.75	19.75	19.75	300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.55	0.57	0.52	0.52	9,310,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	71	71	69.5	71	90,300
International Exch. Bank	32	32	32	32	57,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	38.5	39	38.5	38.5	300,800
Philippine National Bank	34	34.5	34	34	3,500
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	14.75	15	14.5	14.75	76,200
Security Bank Corp.	47	47	47	47	63,000
Union Bank of the Phil.	39	39.5	39	39	22,200
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
First Metro Invest. Corp.	27.5	28	27.5	28	16,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	185	185	185	185	4,510
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2140	2140	2140	2140	840
Ivantage Corp.	1.2	1.26	1.18	1.22	17,727,000
INDUSTRIAL					
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	44	45	44	45	118,800
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	45.5	46	45.5	46	710,800
Manila Electric Co. A	13.75	13.75	13.75	13.75	17,900
Manila Electric Co. B	20.25	20.25	20	20	102,200
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.4	6.5	6.3	6.5	970,000
Petron Corp.	4.4	4.5	4.3	4.45	4,041,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	200,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.99	1	0.99	0.99	440,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	2.22	2.22	2.22	2.22	10,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	20	20.5	20	20	25,100
Jollibee Foods Corp.	35.5	35.5	35.5	35.5	51,800
San Miguel Pure Foods A	58	58	58	58	100
RFM Corp.	0.75	0.77	0.75	0.76	600,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.75	250,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.185	0.185	0.185	0.185	220,000
San Miguel Corp. A	60	60	59	60	230,900
San Miguel Corp. B	79.5	79.5	78.5	79	152,300
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	5,000
Universal Robina Corp.	18.5	19.25	18.5	19.25	5,656,200
Vitarich Corp.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	80,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.33	1,030,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	1.5	1.5	1.46	1.48	5,085,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.82	50,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.5	4.55	4.4	4.55	1,251,000
CHEMICALS					
Mabuhay Vinyl Corp.	0.71	0.71	0.7	0.7	220,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Global Equities Inc.	0.0725	0.075	0.07	0.0725	13,400,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.45	0.45	0.4	0.4	210,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	88,000,000
Ayala Corp.	352.5	352.5	350	350	9,290
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	358,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.024	0.024	0.024	0.024	22,000,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	36,000
APC Group Inc.	0.215	0.215	0.205	0.21	2,600,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0075	0.008	0.0075	0.008	198,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.91	1	0.91	0.96	5,940,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1	1.1	1	1.1	80,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	90,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9	9	9	9	10,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	0.99	0.99	0.97	0.99	3,230,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.65	1,390,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	2.85	2.9	2.8	2.8	1,029,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	5.8	6	5.8	6	834,000
Medco Holdings	0.22	0.22	0.21	0.215	670,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	10,000
Pacifica	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.011	36,000,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.225	0.23	1,850,000
Republic Glass Hldg. Corp.	1.52	1.52	1.52	1.52	3,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.15	0.155	0.15	0.15	5,800,000
SM Investments Corp.	223	223	219	219	51,940
South China Resources Inc.	0.74	0.74	0.74	0.74	100,000
Seafront Resources Corp.	0.43	0.54	0.43	0.53	590,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.065	0.065	0.06	0.06	3,000,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.12	0.125	0.12	0.12	1,260,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	11	11.25	11	11.25	8,250,300
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	20,000
Belle Corp.	1.34	1.36	1.3	1.36	15,589,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93	10,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	3,280,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.86	1.9	1.86	1.88	1,804,000
C & P Homes Inc.	1.7	1.74	1.7	1.72	219,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.205	0.205	0.205	0.205	2,050,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.66	0.68	0.66	0.66	58,640,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.025	0.026	0.025	0.026	6,100,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.44	1.44	1.36	1.36	5,598,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	300,000
Gotesco Land Inc.B	0.07	0.085	0.07	0.085	800,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	100,000
Interport Res.	0.0055	0.006	0.0055	0.006	25,000,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.225	0.25	0.225	0.25	5,260,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.55	0.56	0.55	0.56	270,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.28	0.28	0.27	0.27	15,780,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.29	0.29	0.27	0.27	1,820,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.15	0.165	0.15	0.165	770,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	8.4	8.4	8.4	8.4	478,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.34	0.36	0.32	0.33	8,670,000
SM Development Corp.	1.56	1.56	1.56	1.56	100,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.8	7.8	7.8	7.8	386,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	2,280,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	12.5	12.5	12.25	12.5	47,700
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.97	0.97	0.94	0.96	2,740,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	895	895	865	890	4,280
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3	3	2.95	3	5,103,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1980	1980	1975	1980	75,440
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.205	0.205	0.2	0.2	2,760,000
Imperial Res.	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	3,000,000
Ionics Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	426,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	1,000,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.05	0.0525	0.049	0.05	3,100,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.12	1.12	1.12	1.12	50,000
Philweb Corp.	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.024	162,900,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	2.44	2.44	2.44	2.44	50,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	11.75	11.75	11.75	11.75	215,700
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.76	1.76	703,000
Manila Jockey Club	3	3	3	3	5,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.15	3.2	3.15	3.2	69,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.45	0.45	0.45	0.45	100,000
EDUCATION					
IPeople Inc.	3.2	3.3	3.2	3.2	80,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Macroasia Corp.	1.84	1.84	1.8	1.8	311,000
Paxys Inc.	9.2	9.3	9.2	9.3	651,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	2.1	2.95	2.1	2.85	8,712,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	2.1	3.05	2.1	2.85	8,404,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.0085	0.009	0.0085	0.009	686,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8	8.3	8	8.2	4,261,000
Benguet Corp. A	12.5	15.5	12.5	15.25	1,056,800
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.04	2.5	2.04	2.5	1,467,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.37	0.42	0.37	0.41	221,310,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.38	0.45	0.38	0.43	46,900,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.028	0.029	0.027	0.029	1,730,200,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.034	0.035	0.033	0.034	731,500,000
Omico Corp.	0.008	0.008	0.0075	0.008	1,020,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	3.9	4.1	3.9	3.95	14,697,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	3.95	4.1	3.95	4	14,823,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	28	28	28	28	118,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.42	0.43	0.42	0.42	2,210,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.44	0.47	0.44	0.46	4,000,000
OIL					
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.26	0.28	0.26	0.27	1,500,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.009	0.011	0.009	0.01	1,454,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.011	291,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.64	0.69	0.64	0.69	810,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.67	0.7	0.67	0.69	290,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.95	4	3.95	4	176,000
PREFERRED					
PLDT (10% Pref) Series R	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series S	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	700
PLDT (10% Pref.) Series U	10.5	10.5	10.5	10.5	100
WARRANTS, PHIL. DEPOSIT RECEIPTS, ETC.					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	13	13	12.75	13	185,200

DISCLOSURES

RIZAL COMMERCIAL BANKING CORP. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 29, 4 p.m. at the Antonio delas Alas Executive Dining Hall, 47th floor, Yuchengco Tower, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Ave. cor. Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City. Stockholders of record as of April 28 are entitled to vote at the meeting.

***

PAXYS INC. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 26, 2 p.m. at the East & West Room of the Manila Golf and Country Club, Harvard Road, Forbes Park, Makati City. ***Compiled by Kate Pedroso, PDI Research***

CURRENCIES

April 17, 2006

Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.825559	1.000000	51.2570
Japan	Yen	0.006959	0.008430	0.4321
United Kingdom	Pound	1.445719	1.751200	89.7613
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.106426	0.128914	6.6077
Canada	Dollar	0.717005	0.868508	44.5171
Singapore	Dollar	0.513471	0.621968	31.8802
Australia	Dollar	0.600669	0.727590	37.2941
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.190626	2.653505	136.0107
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.220120	0.266631	13.6667
Brunei	Dollar	0.511880	0.620040	31.7814
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000092	0.000111	0.0057
Thailand	Baht	0.021697	0.026281	1.3471
UAE	Dirham	0.224777	0.272272	13.9558
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.211300	62.0876
Brazil	Real	0.385956	0.467508	23.9631
India	Rupee	0.018354	0.022232	1.1395
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.224886	0.272405	13.9627
Mexico	New Peso	0.074428	0.090155	4.6211
Korea	Won	0.000861	0.001043	0.0535
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025451	0.030829	1.5802

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Please send:
- A Letter of Application (with contact number)
- Resumé (Job experience, Education, References)
- Transcript of Records

Interviews will be held in Sagada on
April 22 - 23, 2006

To: **Mr. Dennis G. Faustino**
Principal

Loans extended by commercial banks up 2.4%

Corporate demand remains sluggish; lenders still cautious

By Doris C. Dumlao

LENDING BY PHILIPPINE BANKS went up by a modest 2.4 percent to hit P1.56 trillion in February from year-ago level, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said yesterday.

The year-on-year loan growth in February marked a deceleration from the five-month high of 3 percent posted in January.

"Commercial bank lending activity continues to be moderate as a result of sluggish corporate demand and the cautious lending stance of most banks despite declining levels of nonperforming loans in the past few months," the BSP said in a statement.

The growth in lending last February was led mainly by loans to financial institutions, real estate and business services (Firebs) sector, which recorded an 18.8 percent annual increase during the month.

Loans to the community, social and personal services sector also expanded by 2.8 percent, and to the electricity, gas and water sector by 2.3 percent.

The agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector posted an 8.1 percent growth in loan take-up given expectations of a much better farm output this year.

However, increases in lending to these sectors were offset by the substantial drop in loans to other key sectors such as construction (-27.4 percent); mining and quarrying (-1.5 percent); manufacturing (-8.9 percent); wholesale and retail trade (-3.3 percent) and the transportation, storage and communication sector (-1.3 percent).

The BSP said banks would likely be encouraged to lend more given the extension of the Special Purpose Vehicle law, which provides fiscal incentives to bulk transfers of bad assets.

The BSP said the extension of the SPV Act would enable the banks to dispose more of their nonperforming loans. This would mean better lending climate as the industry's NPL ration to total loans will continue to decline.

The BSP said it had remained focused on its efforts to strengthen the banking sector's overall asset quality as a means of encouraging lending activity to the real sector.

"On the demand side, loan demand is expected to benefit from favorable domestic interest rates and improved business expectations as a result of steady progress in fiscal consolidation and other key economic reforms," the BSP said.

CICT chief says RP still an e-commerce backwater

By Daxim L. Lucas

THE COUNTRY WILL REMAIN an electronic commerce backwater in a rapidly developing world unless the government implements policies to increase Internet penetration, a key regulator warned on Monday.

In a press statement, the head of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) said that increasing the rate of Internet penetration was the "key to accelerating the growth of electronic commerce in the country."

Speaking at a seminar for government officials involved in public key infrastructure in Quezon City, CICT chair Virgilio L. Peña said the Electronic Commerce Act "has not made significant progress in terms of implementation."

He said that while the E-Commerce Act or Republic Act 8792 was enacted six years ago, "there has been very little commerce happening except for the banking industry."

This phenomenon of an underdeveloped e-commerce sector is due mainly to the continuing lack of public access to personal computers and the Internet.

He said PC penetration rate in the country remained at less than 10 percent.

To make things worse, the bulk of e-commerce business being conducted locally is being transacted with websites abroad, with very little business changing hands within the Philippines.

Peña said e-commerce development was also deterred by the underdeveloped infrastructure, especially in payment systems.

In particular, most businesses over the Internet were being transacted with credit cards. This system, he said, was still in the early stage of development in the country.

In his statement, Peña also called on government agencies to "remove interagency barriers."

"Each agency must connect and share information with each other," he said. "The barriers need to be broken down. Otherwise the delivery of services may not be as effective."

Review of incentives granting system sought

By Ronnel W. Domingo

CONCEPCION

INDUSTRIALIST RAUL T. CONCEPCION YESterday picked up calls for a review of the government's system of granting fiscal perks to investors as the country aimed at balancing the budget by 2008.

Concepcion said in a press briefing that incentives should be reviewed in line with the government's revenue targets.

"These incentives should be rationalized prospectively and not retroactively," he said.

In particular, Concepcion said incentives to the call center industry was not necessary because investors were bent on doing business here even without the perks.

Concepcion said the National Economic and Development Authority should be more involved in the administration of perks.

"The grant of incentives should be more than just issuing a list of priority investments," he said. "Public disclosure and the efficient flow of information should be observed here."

Concepcion's statements were made after former Economic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito said in his column in yesterday's issue of the INQUIRER that a joint study conducted by economists based in the University of the Philippines and Ateneo de Manila showed that the Board of Investments' system of incentives should be reviewed.

Habito said certain BOI incentives were redundant, meaning the beneficiaries would invest in the country even without the perks because they want to tap the domestic market or access inputs available here.

According to the Senate Economic Planning Office (Sepo), there were 40 laws that the Department of Finance consider "sources of undue revenue losses."

Sepo said changing special laws to remove perks was expected to generate some P11.3 billion in additional revenue, which was "a small compared to the losses from fiscal incentives—P158 billion in special economic zones and P26.8 billion in BOI-registered projects."

Other beneficiaries of the fiscal perks include cooperatives, museums, government-owned and -controlled firms and certain not-for-profit institutions.

Data from the DOF show that in 2003, the government lost P300 billion in foregone revenues due to various tax exemptions.

BOI data show that between 1995 and 2001, the government was able to attract an average of P10 in investments and P21 in export earnings for every peso of incentives.

Leyte-Mindanao linkup plan pushed

By Abigail L. Ho

THE NATIONAL TRANSMISSION Corp. (Transco) is batting for a 2009-2010 implementation of the multi-million-dollar Leyte-Mindanao interconnection project, which is scheduled for construction in 2014.

Transco president and chief executive Alan Ortiz said it would make sense for the government, through the Department of Energy, to revisit the project and accelerate its implementation as it could help prevent a power crisis in the Mindanao grid.

He said the project had been shelved several times in the past, due to budgetary constraints, as it was not considered practical and feasible.

Two years ago, he said the DOE commissioned Chubu Electric to conduct a feasibility study on the Leyte-Mindanao line.

"(Chubu Electric) said the project was not feasible, given the promise that new merchant capacity would be installed in Mindanao by 2003 or 2004," he said.

"If, however, no new merchant plants are proposed in Mindanao by the end of 2004, then it would make sense for the DOE to revisit the Leyte-Mindanao interconnection project," he added.

He said an internal estimate of the department showed that the project would cost only $275 million, much less than the estimate of $450 million five years ago.

Philippine National Oil Co. president Eduardo Mañalac had said the accelerated implementation of the Leyte-Mindanao interconnection project had prompted PNOC Energy Development Corp. to push for the implementation of the $200-million 100-MW geothermal project in Cabalian, Southern Leyte.

"The Leyte-Mindanao interconnection will make our project feasible," he said.

Manila Mining to start 2-year exploration plan

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

MANILA MINING CORP., AN AFFILIATE OF top gold miner Lepanto Consolidated Mining Co., has secured the government's go-ahead for the start of exploration activities in a 750-hectare gold mine field in Surigao del Norte, Manila Mining officials said yesterday.

With the permit, Manila Mining chair Felipe Yap said the company could now pursue investment discussions with three foreign mining firms that had expressed interest in drilling 400 hectares of the company's 750 hectare Kalaya-an property in Surigao del Norte.

Talks were earlier stalled due to delays in the renewal of Manila Mining's exploration permit for the Kalaya-an property.

Exploration permit No. XIII-014 was renewed last Nov. 30 by Environment and Natural Resources Assistant Secretary Jermias Dolino, also the concurrent director of mines and geo-sciences Jeremias Dolino. The company, however, waited for its copy of the approved permit.

Yap disclosed during the mining firm's stockholder's meeting yesterday Environment and Natural Resources Undersecretary for mining Demetrio Ignacio had given the company the clearance to inform its stockholders that its exploration permit had been approved.

The company later obtained a copy of the permit. The permit was forwarded to Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Angelo Reyes for notation.

In the meantime, Manila Mining's chief geologist Jose Garcia said around P180 to P200 million would be earmarked to fund a two-year work program for the Kalaya-an gold mine, involving drilling, social and environmental compliance, waste management and possible feasibility studies.

The amount does not include possible investments in the Kalaya-an gold mine by prospective foreign investors.

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Circular No. 525
Series of 2006

Subject: AMENDMENT OF REGULATIONS ON (A) REAL ESTATE/CHATTEL TRANSACTION BETWEEN THE BANK AND ITS EMPLOYEE(S), DIRECTOR(S), OFFICER(S), STOCKHOLDER(S) OR RELATED INTEREST(S), AND (B) LEASE OR SUBLEASE TO THIRD PERSONS OF ANY PORTION/S OF ITS OFFICE PREMISES

Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 346 dated 23 March 2006, the provisions of the Manual of Regulations for Banks (MORB) are hereby amended, as follows:

Section 1. The provisions of Subsection X162.5 of the MORB are hereby amended to read as follows:

"§ X162.5 Report on real estate/chattel transactions. Banks shall within ten (10) banking days from approval of the transaction:

a. Report to the appropriate supervising and examining department of the BSP, any real estate/chattel transaction (such as, but not limited to, rentals or leases, purchases and sales, of foreclosed assets) between the bank and its director(s), officer(s), employee(s), or between the bank and its stockholder(s) or their related interest(s), as defined under Item "c" and "e", respectively, of Subsection X326.1; and

b. Certify to the BSP that such transaction has been thoroughly reviewed and verified as having been entered into in the best interest of the bank.

Section 2. Subsection X606.4 of the MORB is hereby deleted.

Section 3. Effectivity. This Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication either in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

For the Monetary Board:

(*Sgd.*) **NESTOR A. ESPENILLA, JR.**
Officer-In-Charge

4 April 2006

PNOC

PNOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION
Building I, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City
Telephone Nos.: 893-6001 to 47 local 2104
Direct Line: 840-1614/Fax No.: (632) 840-1619

INVITATION TO APPLY FORELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC) through the CY2006 *Corporate Budget* intends to apply the sum of Pesos: Eighteen Million Two Hundred Eleven Thousand Eight Hundred (Php 18,211,800.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to payments under the contract for the **On-Call Hauling of Coal and Other Bulk Cargo from Batangas Coal Terminal to Various Clients/BT06-1052** (the "Project"). Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at Bid opening.

PNOC EC now invites Bids from eligible Bidders for the On-Call Hauling of Coal and other Bulk Cargo from Batangas Coal Terminal to Various Clients located in San Miguel, Bauan, Batangas. The contract duration for the Project is Six (6) Months.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary pass/fail criteria as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations Part A (IRR-A) of Republic Act 9184 (R.A. 9184), otherwise known as the "Government Procurement Reform Act," and is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines, and to citizens or organizations of a country the laws or regulations of which grant similar rights or privileges to Filipino citizens, pursuant to Republic Act 5183 (R.A. 5183) and subject to Commonwealth Act 138 (C.A. 138). Only Bids from Bidders who pass the eligibility check will be opened. The process for the eligibility check is described in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB. The bidder with the Lowest Calculated Bid (LCB) shall advance to the post-qualification stage in order to finally determine responsiveness of the bid to technical and financial requirements of the project. The contract shall then be awarded to the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bidder (LCRB) who was determined as such during the post-qualification procedure.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from PNOC EC Procurement Section (c/o George N. Alejandro) starting April 11, 2006 at PNOC EC Bldg. 1, Energy Center, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee in the amount of Pesos: Two Thousand Five Hundred (Php 2,500.00). The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

PNOC EC will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on **May 3, 2006, 10:00 a.m.** at PNOC EC Batangas Coal Terminal in San Miguel, Bauan, Batangas.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be submitted to PNOC EC's Bids and Awards Committee, Bldg. 1, Energy Center, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, no later than **2:00 P.M. of May 16, 2006**. The bids and eligibility requirements shall be publicly opened at 2:15 of May 16, 2006. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid security in any form stated in the Instructions to Bidders. **Late Bids shall not be accepted.**

PNOC EC reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

This publication is also posted in our website at www.pnoc-ec.com.ph and in the DBM website at www.procurementservice.net.

Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI—April 11 & 18, 2006)

People, Events & Products

E-mail: pr_pep@inquirer.com.ph
aespinosa@inquirer.com.ph

Editor **Aries Espinosa**

Buying abroad made easy through Western Union

MANOLO ZAMORA, A 41-YEAR-OLD vice president for a local holding company, frequently buys items from abroad-whether they be spare-parts for his car, collective watches, or any rare and interesting items. In some instances, Manolo would even ask his father-in-law to help purchase items from the United States on his behalf.

Manolo remembers that in the earlier days, purchasing items overseas was a difficult process and to a certain extent expensive as well. This is especially so if and when he would ask relatives to help him buy items he cannot source in the Philippines.

"Since a lot of these purchases can't be made with a Philippine credit cards, I resorted to bank wire transfers, which in some instances problematic, especially when the banks do not have affiliates in the Philippines," Manolo said.

According to Manolo, the waiting time of between three to five working days for bank transfers was an additional hassle. This is especially inconvenient, when he needs to send the money immediately such as in emergency situations.

Learning about the Western Union's Send-Money Abroad service made Manolo's life easier. It is a quick, convenient and reliable way to send money abroad. For as low as US$14* for transfers amounting to US$200 and below, customers can send money to Australia, Brunei, Canada, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and the United States of America, in a matter of minutes**.

"Western Union has so many locations here throughout the Philippines and abroad that it makes it very convenient for me and the person I'm sending the money to. With the speed, value and convenience it offers, Western Union is my remittance scheme of choice." Manolo said with enthusiasm.

To use this service, customers can visit any of over 3,000 participating Western Union Agent location throughout the Philippines, present a valid ID, fill up the green "To Send Money" form and their beneficiaries will receive the transfer in minutes**. Even more convenient, customers are able to send money transfers after banking hours and even on weekends at these participating agent locations. There is little missed opportunities.

The convenience extends to the recipient abroad as they can collect the money from any of the 253,000 Western Union Agent locations around the world. With more than 253,000 Agent locations worldwide, combined with its subsidiary Orlandi Valuta, there's sure to be a location near your recipient.

The Western Union Send-Money Abroad service is available in more than 200 countries and territories where Western Union Money Transfer® services are offered. For more information on the service and its availability please contact 888-1200 for Metro Manila, 1-800-1-888-1200 for free calls outside Metro Manila or text (0917) 888-1200.

BOI, CDC, SBMA INK MOA TO SIMPLIFY INVESTOR APPLICATION PROCESS

A Memorandum of Agreement between the Clark Development Corp, the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority and the Board of Investments was signed recently which deputized the two economic zones in Central Luzon to accept and evaluate applications for investors to Clark and Subic. The signed agreement puts into effect President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's thrust on investment simplification that provides just 'one face' to the investor to make the application process shorter and easier. CDC President Antonio R. Ng (third from right) and Subic May Metropolitan Authority Chair Feliciano Salonga (fourth from left) shake hands after the MOA signing. Also present at the signing were (from left): Efren V. Leano of the BOI, Usec. Thomas G. Aquino of the Department of Trade and Industry, Armand C. Arreza, SBMA Administrator; Secretary Peter B. Favila of the Department of trade and Industry, Elmer C. Hernandez, Vice Chair and Managing Head, BOI; CDC Chair Rizalino S. Navarro and CDC Executive Vice President Victor Jose I. Luciano.

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Mid-way in its quest, it was discovered that the ink cost per page was significantly decreased, reflecting a longer mileage from soy. Further cost savings were also derived from the use of ensitometers to control the amount of ink used, and switching from the use of drums as ink containers to larger, refillable totes. NPI, and the Philippine Printing industry has adapted the reliable standard system of computing for ink cost by cost per page, and not by price per kilo. In this, the use of Soy ink reigns supreme.

As a supplement, the use of totes also minimizes the need to manufacture/purchase and dispose drums, pails or cans; and is line with NPI's quest to protect the environment.

NPI is the only soybean oil based web-offset ink manufacturer in the Philippines. Most local manufacturers still use petroleum as the base of their ink. Among NPI's many clients are: Asian Wall St. Journal, Bandera, Inquirer Libre, Tumbok, Cebu Daily News, Manila Times, Manila Standard Today, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chinese Commercial News, Yuyitung Commercial Press, Lexicon Press, Print Town, Guarantor Printing, Philippine Journalists Inc, Saksi sa Balita and Grand C Graphics.

PAOLC RECEIVES LIVELIHOOD ASSISTANCE

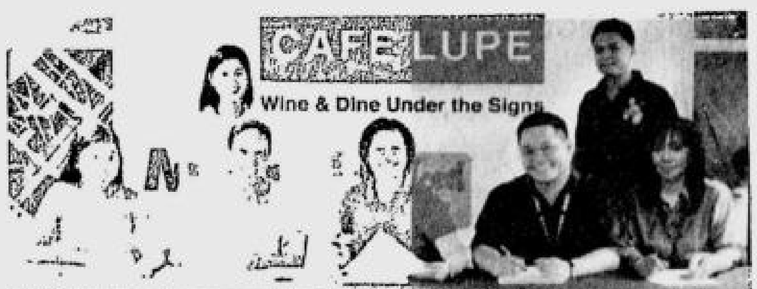
In an effort to continuously support the Armed Forces of the Philippines, other than the Search for The Outstanding Philippine Soldiers (TOPS), Metrobank Foundation recently awarded through the Armed Forces of the Philippines Officers' Ladies Club-Philippine Army Chapter (PAOLC) 6 motorized sewing machines. Dr. Lorna V. Esperon, adviser of the club, affirms that the sewing machines would be a big help to the families of the soldiers. The wives will start sewing rugs and will progress to sewing curtains and bed sheets after further training. In photo are Dr. Lorna V. Esperon (2nd from right) together with Elvira Ong Chan (3rd from right), executive vice president of Metrobank Foundation Inc and Margaret T. Cham (2nd from left), assistant vice president of PSBank with other officers of the PAOLC.

LAGUNA BELAIR SCHOOL STUDENTS BAG AWARDS

Laguna BelAir School students copped three feats in a week. In the 'Search for the Whiz of the South' contest organized by the Rotary Club of Laguna Technopark, last Jan. 28, they bested students from 19 private and public high schools in the south corridor of Laguna. LBA school won the champion award while its student, Cedric A. Viguilla, won the 'Whiz of the South' award in the mathematics category. In the Interschool Science Quiz Bee organized by the Sta. Rosa Science and Technology School last Jan. 31, again, LBA school students won the championship award. Shown in the photo is the winning team, (from left): Science and Math Coordinator Joel de Castro, Jon Louis De Leon, Cedric A. Viguilla and Aguilla Gamaliel P. Juan.

STERLING PAPER CONDUCTS TRADERS' WEEK

Sterling Paper starts its year-long celebration of its 60th anniversary with the Traders' Week held last Feb. 13-17 at Sterling Place, Makati. During the event, Sterling Paper's trade partners were showcased with the latest designs and innovations in school and office supplies. Photo shows retailers making their bookings for the coming school opening. For school and office supplies inquiries please call 813-7828.



CAFÉ LUPE
Wine & Dine Under the Signs

CANDY PANGILINAN PERFORMS AT CAFÉ LUPE

Witty comedienne Candy Pangilinan signs up for a one night show at Café Lupe Makati. Aptly entitled Laugh at Lupe, showdate is on May 19. Representing Café Lupe is Emilie T. Cruz (left) and Troy Alcala (right). Also present are Kristine Aguila, Marivic Sumaoang, Beth Jimenez and Aries Dela Cruz. For reservations call 890-3319 or 0919-5247345 and look for Marivic.

Handog Pasasalamat from Hari

AFTER BEING AWARDED AS THE ASIA PACIFIC DISTRIBUTOR OF THE YEAR 2005, Hyundai Asia Resources Inc (Hari), now returns the honor to the people as it offers three easier options to own a Starex with its Handog Pasasalamat Promo. People can now avail of the 2005 Starex CRDi automatic transmission, and 2006 Starex CRDi automatic or manual transmission through three options that include a free 10.2" Ceiling Mount Digital Monitor with built-in DVD Player; discount of P30,000 for cash buyers; or special financing packages. The promo runs from April 1 to 30 only. Through this, Hyundai hopes to imply to the people their sincere appreciation and at the same time, continue their commitment of giving the people premiere cars at reasonable costs.

Bits & Clips

Hassle-free summer with Charmee

SUMMERTIME IS HERE AGAIN, and it's fun time for everyone. But before you leave for that great vacation escape, be sure to keep yourself fresh and comfortable with feminine protection that lets you have hassle-free summer getaways. With Charmee Unscented Pantyliner's Dry-Soft & Comfortable Cover, one is assured of smooth and gentle protection; Soft Side Panels prevent side skin irritation; and Strong Adhesives keep the pad securely in place. Charmee Pantyliners are especially designed to make users feel fresh and clean throughout the day. Charmee Unscented Pantyliners comes in 8s, 10s and 20s per pack and are available at very affordable prices in all leading supermarkets, groceries, and drugstores nationwide.

MFI scholarship deadline

DEADLINE FOR ACCEPTANCE FOR SCHOLARSHIP at the Meralco Foundation Institute (MFI has been extended till April 19. Over a hundred slots for full scholarship are open for the incoming freshmen of the 3-year Industrial Technician Program (ITP) for the school opening come June. Entrance exams will be given every Wednesday until the deadline period. High school graduates who will successfully pass the entrance exams and interviews will undergo the Stop (Summer Training Orientation Program). Beginning this school year, MFI will also admit paying students who will pass the entrance exams and other requirements. Application forms may be obtained from the Registrar's Office at MFI Bldg. in Ortigas Avenue (beside Medical City Hospital) in Pasig, or call 632-0756 to 67 loc. 283 or 446 for more information.

First Five sampling tour

FIRST FIVE OFFERS FIVE MOUTH-WATERING INgredients, all combined in one delectable bar! Scrumptious mocha cream is sandwiched between crisp wafers, coated with chewy caramel, and sprinkled with crunchy rice crispies. Then this whole dreamy concoction is coated with sweet, rich chocolate. First Five is very affordable, offering a budget-friendly way to enjoy a fun break from work or school. Watch out for free samples, which will be given out soon in different venues all over Luzon and various resorts around Luzon on April 22-23 and 29-30.

Pasap holds national confab

THE PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF SECRETARIES and Administrative Professionals would like to invite executive assistants and administrative professionals to the National Convention entitled "A Leap to a Remarkable Difference" to be held at Makati A and B of Makati Shangrila Hotel on April 25 and 26. For more details please call the secretariat office at 813-6468 and 893-8426.

Ibabao, Batangas Fiesta

AS ONE OF THE MAJOR EVENTS TO MARK ITS fiesta on April 22, the barrio of Ibabao in Cuenca Batangas is inviting professional singers to join a singing contest to be held on April 20. Huge prizes await the winners as Hermana Mayor and sponsors Mr and Mrs Ceil Custodio will be giving away P20,000 (plus plaque) to the grand prize winner as well as P10,000 and P5,000 (and plaques) to the first and second runner ups. Three winners will also receive P1,000 each as consolation prizes. Audition will be on April 20, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Ibabao, Cuenca, Batangas and contestants must be accompanied by the Rolling Thunder band during the contest proper. For details, contact Peter Atienza (0921-2628144) or Vic Limbo (0919-7116015).

Management seminar

TO THOSE WHO WANT TO BE EFFECTIVE MANAgers, be it entrepreneurs or corporate career men or women, a seminar on "Effective Management" will be held on April 29 at the Hotel Philippine Plaza from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The seminar aims to tackle the management cycle framework and other management skills. There will be a.m. snacks, lunch and p.m. snacks. Materials and certificates will also be given. For inquiries, call 827-8128 or 0927-2407981 and look for Gina Areopagita.

FULL SPEED AHEAD FOR THE ASCENSION COLUMBARY

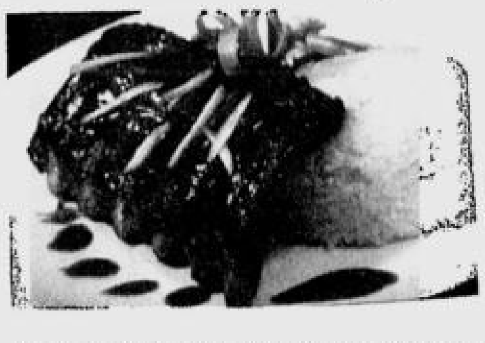
Caelum Developers Inc, poised to be one of the leaders in the rapidly growing columbary industry, reports that the first phase of its multi phased The Ascension Columbary project is way ahead of schedule with the developers targeting the early part of November 2006 to inaugurate the new church building. With the cost and availability of burial plots nearing alarming proportions. The Ascension Columbary is positioned as a cost effective, convenient, practical, and accepted burial option. The Ascension Columbary which is located along araneta avenue in Quezon City will initially house 5,500 vaults with each vault capable of housing a total of four urns. The development of the project also provides landscaped environ and ample parking space. A total of three columbarium buildings are expected to be built.

COCOLIFE, FAMILY ROSARY CRUSADE FOUNDATION MOA SIGNING

Cocolife and the Family Rosary Crusade Foundation recently signed a memorandum of agreement that will enable employees of the Family Rosary Crusade Foundation Inc to enjoy life insurance and retirement benefits under Cocolife's Group Retirement Plan. Family Rosary Crusade Foundation Inc is a non-profit religious organization founded by the late Fr. Patrick Peyton, CSC. Its mission is the evangelization of culture, using mass media to entertain, inspire, educate and support the spiritual well-being of the family through prayers, particularly the Holy Rosary. Photo shows mass marketing head Francis Nob (4th from left) awarding the policy to Family Rosary Crusade directress Gennie Jota (3rd from left), joined by (from left) Salcedo branch manager Jess Quevada, agency manager Roger Jamora, Family Rosary's accountant Sally Mance, and marketing and franchising head Nikko de Guzman-Ledesma.

Product FILES

Get the best of the west at Stars & Stripes



WHILE EVERYONE'S RUNNING AFTER THE American Dream, many have been able to get a taste of good American dining at Stars & Stripes.

Designed to look and feel all-American, Stars & Stripes, located at the Blue Wave along Macapagal Avenue brings a taste of the Big Apple within reach. With images depicting the bright lights of New York and the mouth-watering aromas of steaks and more from its kitchen, Stars & Stripes makes for a truly unique dining experience.

But more than ambience and atmosphere, the scrumptious fare that populate their menu has made Stars & Stripes a habitué of some of the most discriminating diners in Manila. Garden fresh salads, crunchy onion rings and succulent fish sticks provide the perfect entourage to the USDA-Certified (United States Department of Agriculture) premium steaks that top their list of most ordered entrees. Fine wine from Stars & Stripes' private cellars complement fresh, steamed salmon topped with unique sauces conjured by chefs with a taste of the West. With every measure taken to achieve that perfect All-American taste tailored for the Filipino palate, Stars & Stripes serves a wide array of All-American classics from burgers to pasta. All in hearty American-sized servings fit for the all-Filipino appetite. What's best is that everything has been priced for the all-Filipino budget!

After entrees, sample a moment of worldly luxury with Café Godiva by Godiva Chocolatier, Incorporated, New York, USA. Or take a bite of golden brown goodness with delicately baked waffles topped with pure, creamery butter and your favorite fruit or nuts.

Bring your whole family to Stars & Stripes and try all the American Classics for Today's Tastes. Soon to branch out at Level 2, Main Building, SM Mall of Asia, Pasay City.

For reservations or other inquiries, call 551-7549 and 89, or email at: starsandstripes@America.hm

"There is an appointed time for everything,
and a time for every affair under the heaven..." Ecclesiastes 3:11

Ester T. Lavares

of Lucena City and Washington D.C.

Former Physics and Math teacher of Manila High School; Quezon Provincial High School; Ballou High School, Washington D.C. and La Reine Catholic School of U.S.A.

Peacefully passed away in the Grace of our Lord
on April 15, 2006 at the age of 81.

Her bereaved brother **Patrocinio** and sister **Herminia**, nephews, nieces and their families request your prayers for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at the La Funeraria Paz, Inc., 145 G. Araneta Avenue, Quezon City.

Interment will be on April 20, 2006 at the Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina City after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

BLESSED MEMORY

CELEDONIA MANGASER AQUINO

"Cely/Enieng"
April 18, 1926-August 10, 1998

On what would have been your 80th birthday

"The words **thank you**
are meaningless in themselves.
But I hope I can give them meaning.
Just as your act, your gift of time, of love,
was a token for your care for me.
So are my simple words
a token of my thanks for your care.
A token of my love for you."

Serafin "Boy" Aquino, Jr.
Bimbo & Menchit, Naila & Ding, Chippy & Cutie,
Fiona & James, Nugget & Noemi, Tim & Tina
& 15 grandchildren

NATIVIDAD PANGANIBAN MAYUGA

of Taal & Lemery, Batangas

Peacefully joined her Creator on Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006 at the age of 92.

Her bereaved children **LOURDES & FRANCO SOLIS, CHARITO & DONG APACIBLE**; grandchildren **Eric & Denise Solis, Eileen & Mac Rogers, Tonette & Mark Humphries, Lally & Oscar Medalla, Margie Apacible, Dinty & Romano Kamantigue, Raymund & Carla Apacible, Tyrene & Martin Abay**; brothers **Guillermo, Alejandro** (†), **Federico** (†), **Rafael**; sisters **Luz Varian, Rosario Ocampo** (†), **Carmen Panganiban**, great grandchildren, nephews, nieces, relatives & friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies at La Funeraria Paz, Sucat Road, Parañaque City.

Interment will be on Saturday, April 22, 2006 at Loyola Memorial Park, Sucat Road, Parañaque City after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

Most Rev. Jose F. Oliveros, D.D.
The Clergy and Faithful of the Diocese of Malolos
extend their sincerest prayers and condolences to the relatives and friends of

REV. MSGR. EDGARDO B. VILLACORTE

(former Social Action Director, Parish Priest of the Parishes of St. Helena, the Empress (Sta. Elena, Hagonoy) St. Ildefonsus (Guiguinto) St. Isidore of Labrador (Pulilan) and National Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima (Valenzuela)

who peacefully joined his Creator, our Loving Father
on April 11, 2006 at Phoenix, Arizona

His remains lie in state at the parish church of St. Ildefonsus, San Ildefonso, Bulacan. **A funeral Mass will be offered on Friday, April 28, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. at San Ildefonso Parish, San Ildefonso, Bulacan.**

"Living or Dying, Lord Jesus, I would be Yours,
Keep me Your own forever,
Draw me day by day nearer to You
Until I am wholly filled with your Love."

Card of Thanks

The parents, **Adan** and **Teresita**, brother **Stephen Tueres**, sister-in-law **Donna Tan Tueres** of

TROY C. TUERES

who died in a car accident last April 2, 2006,

jointly with the family members wish to acknowledge with thanks and convey heartfelt gratitude to all friends and sympathizers who, in some way or the other helped and condoled with them in their hours of bereavement.

DEATH NOTICES

ARMANDO D. MEDINA

Died in the Grace of our Lord on April 9, 2006 at the age of 46.

His body lies in state at the Family residence in #332, 3rd St., Holy Family Cmpd., Talon, Las Piñas City.

Interment will be on Thursday, April 20, 2006 at Las Piñas Catholic Cemetery, Naga Road, Pulang Lupa, Las Piñas City.

His family request the readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

◆

FLORENCIO FERREROS CHOCO, JR.

Died last April 12, 2006 at the age of 76.

His remains lie in state at the Floresco Funeral Homes, A. Mabini St., Caloocan City.

Interment will be on Wednesday, April 19, 2006 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass at the Manila North Cemetery.

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

Nothing that is remembered fades and no one
who has touched a heart truly passes away . . .

In loving memory of the
Eleventh Death Anniversary
of

Luz Puyat Martel

April 18, 1995

Holy Masses will be offered at the following Churches:

SANTUARIO DE SAN ANTONIO Forbes Park, Makati City	7:30 AM
NUESTRA SEÑORA DE GUIA PARISH Ermita, Manila	7:30 PM
OUR LADY OF SORROWS PARISH F.B. Harrison, Pasay City	6:00 AM
MALATE CHURCH M.H. Del Pilar, Malate, Manila	6:00 AM 7:00 AM 6:00 PM
ASSUMPTION PARISH Leveriza, Manila	6:00 AM 6:15 PM
HARRISON PLAZA CHAPEL Malate, Manila	12:00 NN 5:30 PM
STA. CRUZ PARISH Sta. Cruz, Manila	1:00 PM
OUR LADY OF EDSA SHRINE Ortigas Ave., Quezon City	12:15 PM
MINOR BASILICA OF THE BLACK NAZARENE Quiapo, Manila	6:00 AM
SAN AGUSTIN CHURCH Intramuros, Manila	7:00 AM
ST. JOHN BOSCO PARISH Arnaiz St., Makati City	7:30 AM
ST. ANDREW THE APOSTLE PARISH Bel-Air, Makati City	6:00 AM
ST. ALPHONSUS MARY DE LIGUORI PARISH Magallanes Village, Makati City	6:15 AM 7:00 AM 12:15 PM 6:00 PM
BACLARAN REDEMPTORIST CHURCH Baclaran, Parañaque	6:45 AM
MANILA CATHEDRAL Intramuros, Manila	7:30 AM

Her family kindly request all readers to remember her in their prayers.

CLASSIFIEDS

PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Merrit Road, Fort Bonifacio, 1200 Taguig City, Philippines
P.O. Box 2102 MCPO, Tel. Nos. 893-6001 to 47/893-1320 Fax No. 840-1575

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation (PNOC-EDC) invites interested contractors, registered with the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) and classified, at least, as Category B, IAC Medium, Sub-Category A, General Engineering, General Building or Specialties and have completed within the last ten (10) years at least three (3) contracts involving the supply, delivery, and installation of HDPE pipes, to apply for eligibility and to bid for the project:

SUPPLY, DELIVERY, AND INSTALLATION OF 2"Ø AND 4"Ø HDPE PIPES AND APPURTENANT MASONRY WORKS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOUTH SAMBALORAN, MALITBOG, AND MAHANAGDONG A & B ZERO CONDENSATE DISPOSAL SYSTEM EDC 06-046

The Approved Budget is PhP 10,703,880.00 chargeable against PNOC-EDC fund. The contract duration is 150 calendar days.

Application forms for eligibility and the bidding documents may be secured from the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group (c/o F.T. Tolibas local 5179) starting **April 11, 2006** upon payment of a non-refundable fee of **Pesos: One Thousand (PhP 1,000.00).**

Site inspection is on **April 20, 2006**. For the purpose of clarifying certain issues, a pre-bid conference will be held on **April 25, 2006, 2:00 p.m.** at the BAC Conference Room, First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila.

Application for eligibility and sealed bids shall be received by the PNOC-EDC Contracts Administration Group, First Floor, Building V, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila **not later than 2:00 p.m. (Contracts Administration Group Office Wall Clock Time)** of **May 10, 2006** and shall be publicly opened immediately thereafter.

PNOC-EDC reserves the right to reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive any informality therein, to accept such bids or to award any part of the work to any bidder whose bid is considered most advantageous to PNOC-EDC.

The Chairman
Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI – April 11 & 18, 2006)

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Meycauayan-Filipinas Pawnshop
Aliw Complex, Calvario, Meyc, Bulacan
All unredeemed Pledges of Oct. 2005 on April 24, 10:00 a.m. • **Lanuza & Sons – Auctioneer.**

Marilao-Filipinas Pawnshop
M&R Bldg. Tabing-ilog, Marilao, Bulacan
All unredeemed Pledges of Oct. 2005 will be auctioned on April 24, 8:00 a.m. • **Lanuza & Sons – Auctioneer.**

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More Classified Ads on pages A14, B2 & B3

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NISSAN

Gov't debt hits ₱3.96T

Growth of liabilities seen to be slowing down

Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S DEBT stock reached P3.965 trillion as of end-January, increasing by 2 percent from the end-2005 figure, as a result of the floating of some $2.2 billion worth of dollar- and euro-denominated bonds in the first month of this year.

If the debt were to be divided among the country's estimated 85.2 million people, each Filipino would have a share of P46,538 of the government's burden.

Despite the increase in the debt stock, the Bureau of the Treasury said the 2-percent month-on-month rise reflected that the growth in the government's liabilities was decelerating.

Slower

National Treasury Omar Cruz noted that the debt increase was slower than the country's gross domestic product growth, which settled at 4.8 percent last year. This showed the government's increasing capability to service its maturing obligations, he said.

"This is a result of the fiscal reforms which are now in place, in line with the government's deficit-reduction program," Cruz said in a statement.

Data from the Bureau of the Treasury showed that as of January, domestic liabilities accounted for P2.157 trillion of the total debt, while foreign obligations accounted for the remaining P1.808 trillion.

Lower

The government's domestic debt was 0.4 percent lower than the P2.164 trillion recorded as of end-2005. The decline in domestic debt meant that debt payments made in January were higher than the the amount of domestic borrowings undertaken during the month.

On the other hand, the government's foreign obligations reflected a 4.9-percent increase from the P1.724 trillion recorded in end-2005.

The increase in external debts was due to the sovereign bond float made last Jan. 4. In the bond issue, the government sold $1.5 billion worth of debt instruments denominated in US dollars, and another $700 million denominated in euros.

Proceeds of the January bond float formed 70 percent of the government's foreign-commercial borrowing requirement of $3.1 billion for 2006. The government is therefore expected to do another sovereign bond float before the end of this year.

Surplus

The borrowings needed for this year will be used to plug an estimated budget deficit of P125 billion, and to settle maturing obligations.

The national government has projected that its debt stock will reach P4.083 trillion by the end of this year, an amount equivalent to 68.1 percent of the country's expected gross domestic product.

The debt stock is expected to rise continually until the government wipes out its budget deficit.

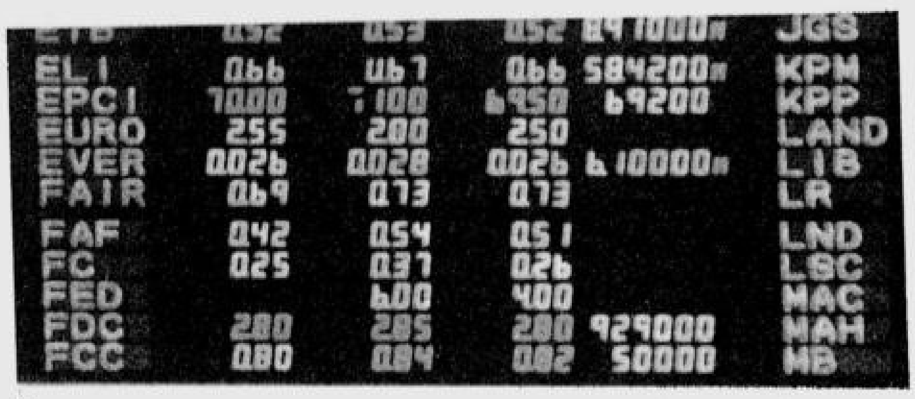
By then, fiscal authorities will no longer have to undertake huge borrowings.

The Arroyo administration hopes to reduce to zero its budget deficit by 2008, and expects to post a surplus by 2009.

Contingent debt

The Bureau of the Treasury also reported that the national government's contingent debt, or the obligations of state-owned firms that carries a sovereign guarantee, declined month-on-month by 1.5 percent to P577.5 billion as of end-January.

Of the contingent liabilities, which will form part of the national government's debt burden if the borrowing state-owned firms default on their loans, domestic obligations accounted for P48.2 billion of the total, while foreign lenders accounted for the remaining P529.3 billion.



TRADERS gather in front of the electronic board of the Philippine Stock Exchange, discussing the increase in share prices, which have gone up 0.24 percent to near six-year highs. Investors yesterday bought into companies that were expected to post strong first quarter results, dealers said. AFP

Power groups get ERC nod to recover ₱863M in charges

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION is allowing the National Power Corp. Small Power Utilities Group (Spug) to recover as much as P863.4 million worth of deferred accounting charges (DAA) for its generation-related expenses.

In an order signed Feb. 10, the ERC said the DAA could be recovered over a period of three years for the Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao grids, through the universal charge-missionary electrification (UC-ME) fund on a yearly basis.

If the UC-ME fund for a given year is not enough to cover the recovery for that year, the balance will be carried over to the succeeding years, until Napocor-Spug recovers the ERC-approved amount in full, according to the ERC order.

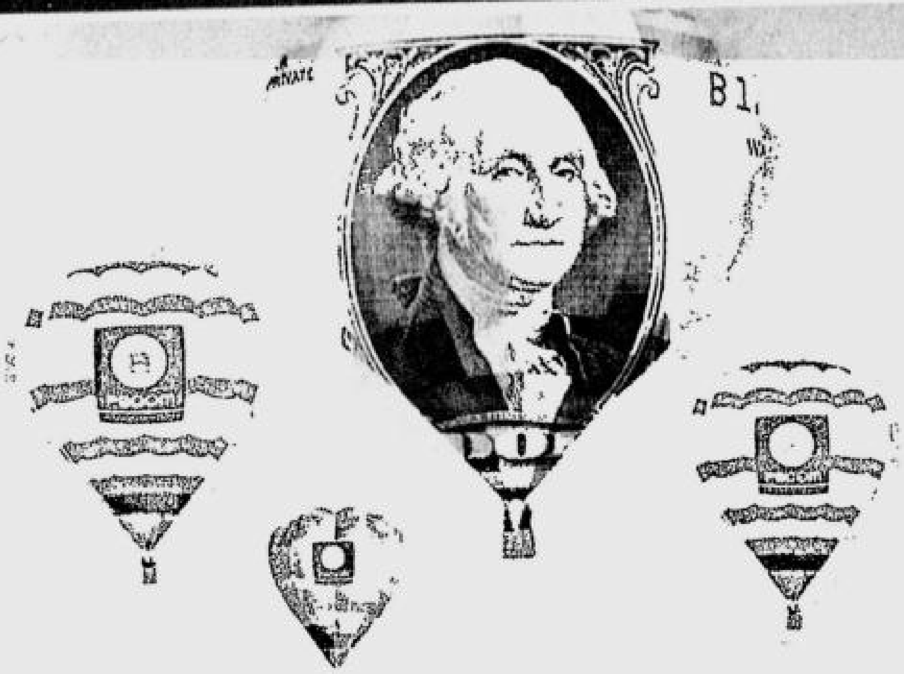
For the Luzon grid, the ERC approved the recovery of DAA amounting to P660.2 million. Close to P85.2 million can be recovered from the Visayas grid, and more than P117.9 million from the Mindanao grid, the order adds.

The DAA recovery was included in Napocor-Spug's second generation rate adjustment mechanism (Gram) application filed on Sept. 18, 2005.

The Gram application covered the period from June 26, 2004 to Dec. 25, 2004.

Under the adjustment mechanism, Napocor-Spug actually sought to recover P945.1 million worth of DAA for the three main grids: P724.5 million in Luzon, P93.9 million in Visayas and P126.7 million in Mindanao.

Fly high to a place where interest rates go nowhere but up.



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BancNet

Allied Bank approves ₱1.2B for agri lending

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE ALLIED BANKING CORP. has approved a new P1.2-billion credit window for Quedan Rural Credit and Guarantee Corp. (Quedancor).

Quedancor will use the credit facility to fund loans for agriculture and fishery sectors.

In continuing its support for the rural sector, Allied Bank will again purchase promissory notes from Quedancor—the state-owned rural credit firm that offers non-collateral loans to farmers and fisherfolk in the countryside, said Nelson C. Buenaflor, Quedancor president and CEO.

"This is the extension of the Allied Bank's credit line for us," Buenaflor yesterday said, adding that the previous credit facility amounting to P300 million loan, has been used up.

He noted that the credit line would allow Quedancor to further expand its lending base to P6.7 billion this year.

In opening up the credit line, Allied Bank plans to avail of a rediscounting window from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

Quedancor has credit lines with leading banks and financial institutions, including the Philippine Veterans Bank, the United Coconut Planters Bank, Land Bank of the Philippines, Equitable-PCI Bank, Keppel Bank, Merchant Bank, Maybank and First Metro Investment Corp.

Last year, Quedancor sealed an agreement with the UCPB and First Metro to manage the issuance of P1.5 billion worth of corporate notes in the capital market.

Fair trade advocates push for safeguard duty

By Ronnel W. Domingo

LABOR GROUPS AND FAIR trade advocates yesterday backed a local company's petition for safeguard duty on the raw material for soap and detergents, saying imports from China would "devastate" the local industry.

In a statement, Fair Trade Alliance-Labor expressed support for to the union and employees of Chempil Albright and Wilson Corp., a manufacturer of sodium tripolyphosphates or STPP.

CAWS is asking the government to impose a safeguard tariff of 30 percent on STPP. The proposed rate is higher than the existing 7 percent on imports from outside Southeast Asia.

"(Such an increase) is just and fair, given the predatory behavior of the importers-exporters involved in the dumping of Chinese STPP into the domestic market and given the now comatose state of the domestic industry," the FTA-Labor said.

The group said imported STPP had increased its share of the local market to 60 percent since 2000, with shipments shooting up 140 percent a year.

"This STPP surge is truly sudden, massive and debilitating for local producers," the group added.

Further, FTA-Labor cited a CAWC study that showed that Chinese exporters were selling to the domestic market at below their cost of production, which was tantamount to "strategic predatory market positioning."

"They are able to do this because the STTP producers in China are obviously subsidized by the Chinese government through the undervalued yuan and the subsidies extended to the various materials used by these producers," the group said.

This is causing the slow death of the local industry as shown by the decrease of CAWC workforce to 200 from a high of 900 employees, it added.

Peso's gains seen to trim public deficit by ₱366B

THE GOVERNMENT HAS TRIMMED ITS projection on the country's public sector debt this year by P366 billion, saying the appreciation of the peso and the additional revenues from the VAT Reform Law will substantially improve the country's debt position.

The outstanding public sector debt (OPSD)—the combined liabilities of the national government, state-owned firms (except financial institutions), and local government units—was originally expected to reach P5.246 trillion by the end of this year, or 88.7 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

The Department of Finance, however, revised the figure to only P4.88 trillion, or 81.4 percent of the expected GDP for this year, on account of the strengthening of the local currency vis-a-vis the US dollar.

Fiscal authorities and analysts from investment banks have made bullish forecasts on the peso, even as the government is seen to improve its budget position—a development that may elicit positive investor sentiment.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), the government body tasked with setting economic policies and targets, changed its forecast on the peso-dollar exchange rate from the original range of 55 to 57 versus the US dollar, to a range of 51 to 53.

Investment bank UBS said the peso could appreciate to as high as 50 to a dollar by the end of this year and to 49 by the end of next year, taking into consideration the increasing inflow of remittances from overseas Filipino workers and improving fiscal climate.

Estimates by the DOF showed that a unit of appreciation of the peso against the US dollar could roughly reduce the debt stock of the government alone by P52 billion. This is because debts denominated in foreign currencies become cheaper with a stronger peso.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said the revision of the OPSD assumption also took into account the expected revenues from the VAT Reform Law, which took effect last November.

The law, which expanded the coverage of the value-added tax since November and raised the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent last February, is seen to generate P75 billion in additional tax collection for the government in 2006.

The new VAT law is considered to be the centerpiece of the Arroyo administration's fiscal reform program and is expected to help trim the government's budget deficit to zero by 2008. The deficit stood at P146.8 billion last year.

The Arroyo administration has undertaken efforts to slow down the growth of the OPSD.

Also, the government is coming up with a scorecard system for government-owned and -controlled corporations.

Under the system, the GOCCs that will meet their fiscal targets will be given fiscal incentives, while those who will fail face the threat of reorganization, if not dissolution.

Michelle V. Remo

PORTION size matters /C4

LIFESTYLE

Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

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Paring menopause to the bone

By Linda B. Bolido

BOOTS Anson-Roa talks about living "Life-to-the-Max."

HOT AND COLD FLASHES, NIGHT sweats, mood swings…

These are some of the things associated with menopause. But they are really no more than inconveniences—and they will pass. However, menopause does bring some significant life changes that can alter a woman's lifestyle, even change it drastically unless she prepares for it.

One important transformation that starts even before women hit the menopausal period occurs in the bones. Throughout a person's life, a process called bone remodeling transpires. Bone is removed and replaced continually.

But as a woman ages, particularly after menopause, the rate at which bones are removed exceed the pace at which bones are built.

Brittle

Bones progressively lose mass and strength making them more vulnerable to breakage or fracture resulting in osteoporosis, or brittle bones.

Dr. Sandra Torres, a rheumatologist at the Cardinal Santos Medical Center and former president of the Philippine Rheumatology Association (PRA), said peak bone mass was achieved at the age of 35. This is when bones are densest and strongest.

Menopause hastens the process of bone loss. "Women can experience bone loss within the first five years after menopause," according to Torres, increasing the risk of developing osteoporosis. Brittle bones make women more vulnerable to fractures that may lead to disfigurement, disability and loss of mobility, restricting their ability to perform certain tasks by themselves and preventing them from participating in some activities they may enjoy.

Torres, one of the speakers during the launch of Life-to-the-Max, an osteoporosis advocacy program of the pharmaceutical company Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) and the Osteoporosis Society of the Philippines Foundation, Inc. (OSPFI), said the condition affected about one-third of women 60-70 years old.

Women usually develop the condition after menopause when they lose the protection of the hormone estrogen. But Dr. Beaver Tamesis, MSD business unit director, said it could also affect women at the prime of their lives.

MSD and OSPFI launched the Life-to-the-Max campaign to increase awareness among Filipinos of what Torres called a "silent epidemic." Boots Anson-Roa, actress, wife, mother, grandmother, is the advocacy's spokesperson, a high-profile example that life does not end after menopause.

In her senior years, Anson-Roa teaches Mass Communications at the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University and De La Salle University. She is executive director of Mowelfund (Movie Workers Welfare Fund) and a member of the Cinema Evaluation Board, among others.

Information

The Life-to-the-Max program aims to provide Filipinos with sufficient information on osteoporosis and to encourage senior citizens to live life to the fullest.

Also part of the campaign is getting women to seek effective medical treatment for osteoporosis so they can remain active with the least discomfort and pain.

Bone loss occurs without symptoms. Osteoporosis can go undiagnosed and untreated for years. But modern testing procedures—simple, quick, convenient, and do not cause a lot of discomfort—are now available. Bone mass density (BMD) testing will alert doctors to the risk of osteoporosis. The Medical City in Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City, a partner in the Life-to-the-Max advocacy, is one of the hospitals with facilities for performing the BMD test.

Certain factors may make one more at risk of osteoporosis. As with other health problems, a sedentary lifestyle increases the likelihood of a person developing brittle bones. Other factors are family history, excessive alcohol consumption, poor nutrition and the use of steroid medication.

Low levels of vitamin D may worsen the problem as it limits absorption of the bone-building mineral, calcium. Recent studies showed more than half of post-menopausal women with osteoporosis had inadequate levels of vitamin D.

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9 million Filipino women have bone problem

OVER NINE MILLION FILIPINO WOMEN aged 50 and above may be suffering from osteoporosis, according to figures of the Philippine National Statistics Office.

The numbers may be higher as many cases remain undiagnosed.

Osteoporosis results in the breakdown of old bone tissues at a rate faster than they can be replaced. Post-menopausal women are the most vulnerable. During the first five to six years after menopause, bone loss may reach three to five percent annually.

The loss of bone mass is not felt or seen so that people do not realize they have osteoporosis.

Some indications of osteoporosis are shrinking height, curve in the back, sloping shoulders, back pain and protruding abdomen. These signs appear when someone already has osteoporosis for some time.

Though there are now medications for osteoporosis called bisphosphonates (e.g. ibandronate), results of an international study show most patients abandon the treatment within a year because of the difficulty of following the schedule over a long period of time. Side effects may also occur like nausea and dizziness, requiring a person to sit still for a while after taking the medication.

Surveys show women prefer once-monthly rather than once-weekly treatment with bisphosphonate. With the first and only once-monthly oral bisphosphonate (i.e. ibandronate) now in the market, it is expected that compliance with treatment schedule will be easier for more women.

Evidence suggests that patients who do not follow their medication schedule strictly are more likely to have fractures.

Women should consult their doctor on recent advances in osteoporosis management.

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Picture-perfect skin can now be a reality with IPL Photorejuvenation Treatment. No other procedure has ever been developed that can accomplish so much with so little risk and downtime.

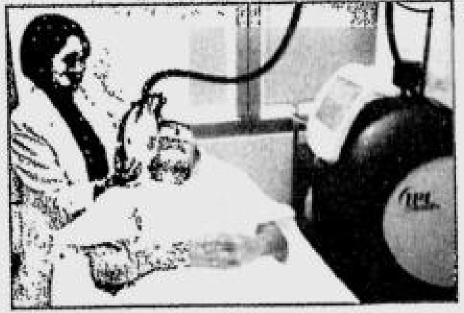
Irene Salud-Delarosa

Irene Salud-Delarosa tells us about her experience: "I'm very, very happy with IPL. It helped reduce my lines, wrinkles and really improved my skin pigmentation. It gave me a beautifully even complexion!"

IPL Photorejuvenation Treatment helps banish freckles, dark spots and spider veins without a trace. According to Irene, "I noticed it gave my skin a 'lift' after only the 3rd treatment. Also, I had some little broken capillaries on my face. They looked like thin, pinkish veins. After about 6 IPL treatments, they totally disappeared! When I went to my high school reunion, someone actually thought I was the daughter of her old classmate. She said my skin made me look so young!"

IPL is a gentle, non-invasive treatment that uses a broad spectrum of light to treat the face, neck, chest, back, hands and virtually anywhere that sun damage or blemishes show. It uses the Intense Pulsed Light technology to correct a variety of skin conditions and skin imperfections: freckles, skin discoloration, signs of aging, age spots, unsightly spider veins, broken capillaries, rosacea and other blemishes. Another fan of IPL is actress/interior design consultant Carmi Martin. She happily relates: "I used to have an uneven skin tone, because of pigmentation and freckles. After IPL, my skin became even! In the past I'd always have to wear make-up because I was afraid to let people see me without it. Now, since I love going to Boracay, I can enjoy the sun and sea make-up free!"

Carmi Martin



Dr. Joya performing the IPL Photorejuvenation Treatment on a client.

To restore an overall youthful look, IPL can simultaneously treat a wide variety of skin concerns safely and effectively. It erases skin damage with minor disruption on the skin's surface unlike other conventional treatments. Carmi adds, "The effect my skin has on people is amazing. Even I couldn't believe it at first. But there was this one time, right after my IPL treatment when I was talking to this guy and all he had to say was, '…your skin…it's so beautiful…' I really recommend IPL! Now, I love to go to Boracay with nothing on – make-up that is."

Restaurateur Cristina Gonzalez-Romualdez is another satisfied IPL client. She relates: "Some skin problems I had were freckles, and a bit of melasma. Also, my skin tone was not even. My skin is fair that's why I easily get freckles. IPL gave me a more even complexion. It helped remove the freckles and the melasma. I remember after the 3rd or 4th session, there was a big improvement. But even after the 1st session I could already see an effect, because my pores tightened. Somebody told me my skin was glowing…and this was right after an IPL treatment! The best thing about it is there's no downtime. So there's no reddening and peeling. Since I like going to the beach, and going out of town, I'm always exposed to the sun. That's why I go for IPL treatments after an outing. I'm really really happy with it!"

Cristina Gonzalez-Romualdez

Irene, Carmi and Cristina are only three of many satisfied clients who have reported a reduction in age spots, freckles and other skin discolorations. Most women who lead active and busy lifestyles are happy with the fact that aside from the visible improvement in their skin, they experience relatively no downtime. This means that one can actually have fairer, even-toned glowing skin after approximately 30 minutes of treatment, and can go to work on the same day, as if nothing happened at all!

Now isn't this the best news for your skin?

To know more about IPL Photorejuvenation, just call Facial Care Centre at 892-SKIN. That's 892-7546.

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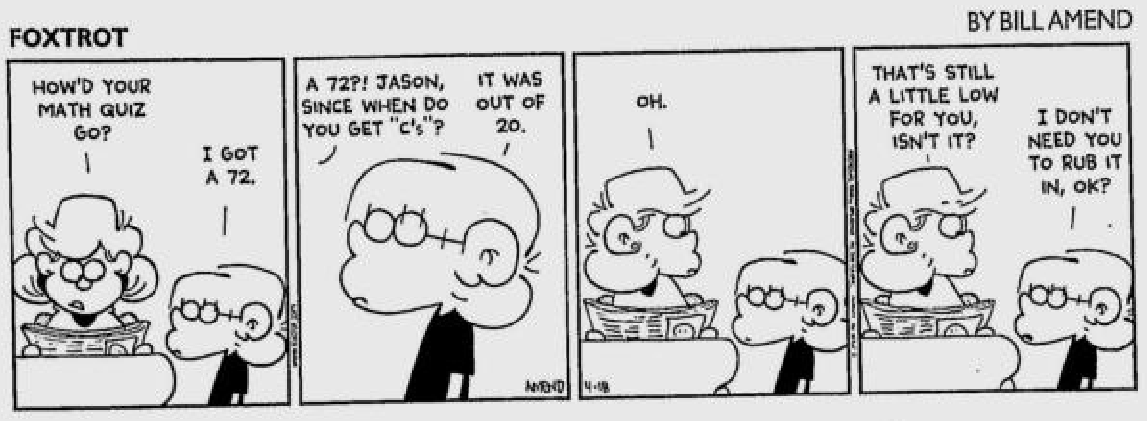
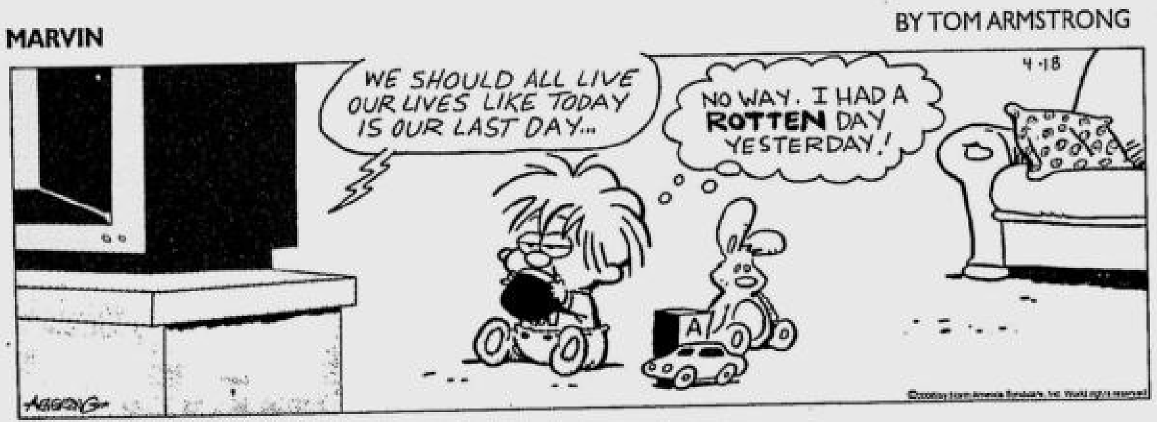
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


HOW'D YOUR MATH QUIZ GO?
I GOT A 72.
A 72?! JASON, SINCE WHEN DO YOU GET "C's"?
IT WAS OUT OF 20.
OH.
THAT'S STILL A LITTLE LOW FOR YOU, ISN'T IT?
I DON'T NEED YOU TO RUB IT IN, OK?
AMEND
4-18

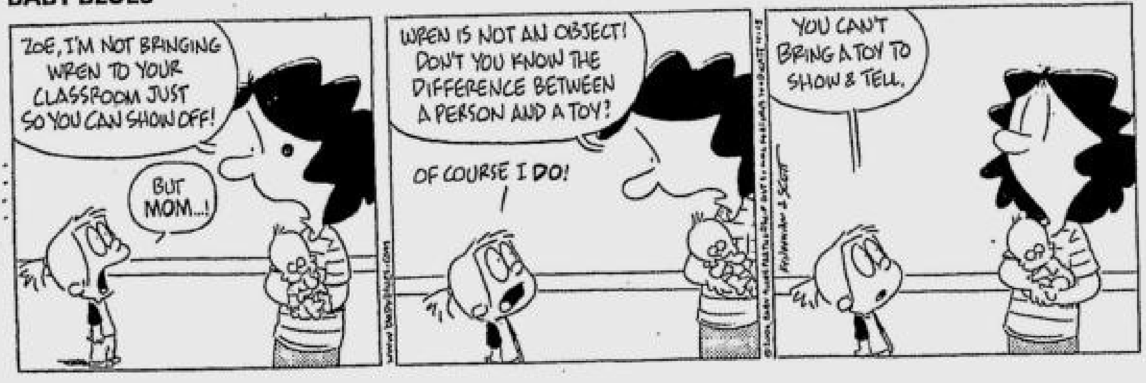
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


WE SHOULD ALL LIVE OUR LIVES LIKE TODAY IS OUR LAST DAY...
NO WAY. I HAD A ROTTEN DAY YESTERDAY!
4-18
A

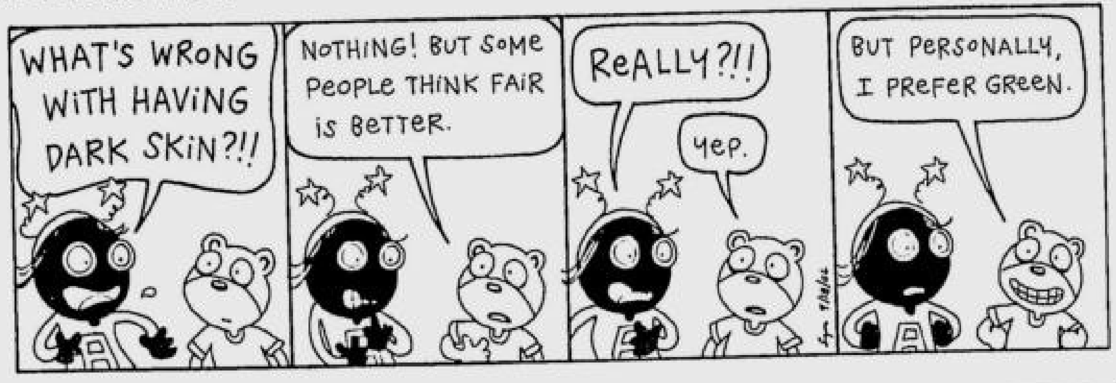
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


ZOE, I'M NOT BRINGING WREN TO YOUR CLASSROOM JUST SO YOU CAN SHOW OFF!
BUT MOM...!
WREN IS NOT AN OBJECT! DON'T YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A PERSON AND A TOY?
OF COURSE I DO!
YOU CAN'T BRING A TOY TO SHOW & TELL.

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


WHAT'S WRONG WITH HAVING DARK SKIN?!!
NOTHING! BUT SOME PEOPLE THINK FAIR IS BETTER.
REALLY?!!
YEP.
BUT PERSONALLY, I PREFER GREEN.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're very determined, creative and earnest about expressing yourself through your many talents. People find you charming and easygoing. Nevertheless, you're industrious, practical and reliable. You show care and affection for loved ones. You're an inventive problem solver. In the year ahead, you will have a major decision or choice to make (perhaps several). Choose wisely.

Birthdate of: James Woods, actor; Melissa Joan Hart, actress; Conan O'Brien, TV host.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): You have to admit it's your nature to leap into a debate. I advise you to resist this impulse. Lots of people are quarrelsome today. Zip thy lip.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is one of those days when you can barely agree with yourself! One voice tells you to do one thing, then another voice tells you to do another. Relax; you're not really hearing voices. It's two aspects of your mind.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Don't get on your high horse when dealing with friends and groups today. I say this because it's very easy to overreact to what others say right now.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Avoid disagreements with bosses, parents, VIPs and authority figures. You won't win. Nevertheless, you want to get your two cents' worth in. (Think before you speak!)

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Political, religious and philosophical areas are all fodder for potential arguments today. Steer clear of these touchy subjects! You're only preaching to the choir or deaf ears.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Disputes about shared property, debt and items that have been loaned or not returned are likely today. Be reasonable. Be patient with others. Practice the Golden Rule.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Conversations with bosses, parents and partners are touchy today! This means you have to go gently and be patient. Don't be critical of others. Don't push anyone's buttons.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Be careful when talking to coworkers today. Something could get blown out of proportion and turn into an argument. Remember that you have to work with these people in the future. (Oh, yeah.)

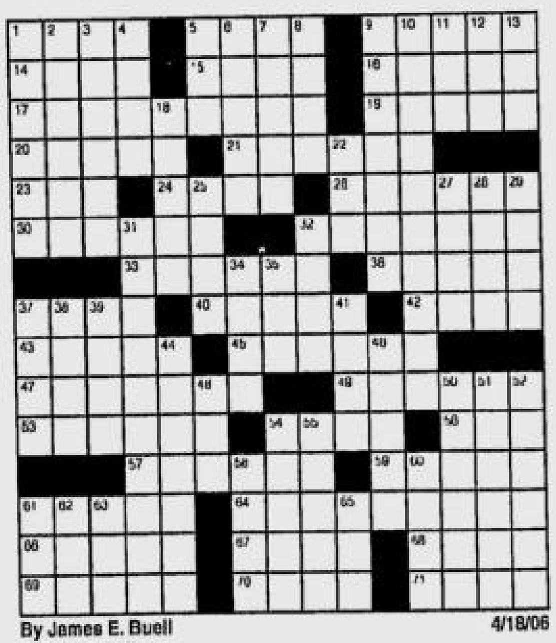
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Parents must be especially patient with children today. Your nerves are frayed. The quickest way to settle a messy situation is often with a hug.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Family conflicts might erupt today. There's also a chance for broken appliances and small accidents in the home. Be extra careful. Take your time.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): It's not worth getting into an argument with siblings, relatives or neighbors. What's the point of that? You have to get along with these people. Demonstrate grace under pressure.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Don't quarrel with others about money and possessions today. It won't resolve anything. Wait until another day to discuss these matters.

DAILY CROSSWORD



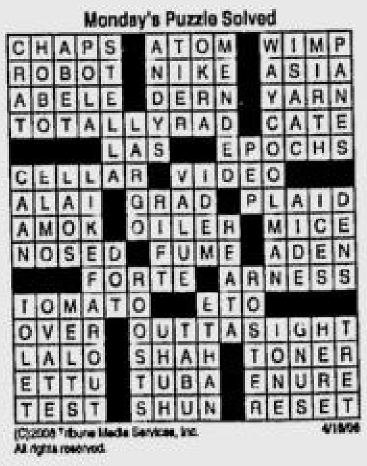
By James E. Buell
Edgewater, FL

4/18/06

ACROSS
1 Peruse
5 Broad bean
9 Tube-pan cake
14 Diplomat's forte
15 Goddess of fertility
16 "Carmen" or "Norma"
17 At risk
19 Aquatic mammal
20 Drive (out)
21 Scarcity
23 Actress Longoria
24 Sheep mamas
26 Puts into office
30 Strauss opera
32 Snoopy alter-ego
33 Operative
36 Feel one's way
37 Made a touchdown
40 Shot out beams
42 __ out a living
43 Chocolate substitute
45 Lie at rest
47 Issue from a source
49 Magic's team
53 Alaska's __ National Park
54 Weevil's meal
56 ISP biggie
57 Author Jack
59 "Perfect Sleeper" maker
61 Curry herb
64 At risk
66 Cartooning style
67 Basso Pinza
68 Nickelodeon's Nick at __
69 "My Favorite Martian" star
70 Thatcher or Heath, e.g.
71 Teen follower?

DOWN
1 Mall occupants
2 Judy of old radio
3 Honest-to-goodness
4 Highest degrees
5 Half a sawbuck
6 Words to an audience
7 Trivial failings
8 Between ports
9 Quarterback running play
10 At risk
11 Bring home
12 Rapper Dr. __
13 Viscous liquid
18 Hollywood pairs
22 Early Olds
25 Loss by friction
27 Chef
28 Booze it up
29 Musher's ride
31 At risk
32 Humvee forerunner
34 Unveil
35 Strong alkali
37 Sailed through
38 Hobble
39 Persia, today
41 Curvaceous cutie
44 Hogwash!
46 Zesty dip
48 Soldering metal
50 Pincered insect
51 Take turns
52 "Buffy the Vampire __"
54 Chimp in a Reagan film
55 Studio caution
58 Losing effort?
60 Buchanan or Ferber
61 Urban ride
62 Cycle beginning?
63 Stir
65 Baby in blue

Monday's Puzzle Solved



C	H	A	P	S	■	A	T	O	M	■	W	I	M	P
R	O	B	O	T	■	N	I	K	E	■	A	S	I	A
A	B	E	L	E	■	D	E	R	N	■	Y	A	R	N
T	O	T	A	L	L	Y	R	A	D	■	C	A	T	E
■	■	■	■	L	A	S	■	■	E	P	O	C	H	S
C	E	L	L	A	R	■	V	I	D	E	O	■	■	■
A	L	A	I	■	G	R	A	D	■	P	L	A	I	D
A	M	O	K	■	O	I	L	E	R	■	M	I	C	E
N	O	S	E	D	■	F	U	M	E	■	A	D	E	N
■	■	■	F	O	R	T	E	■	A	R	N	E	S	S
T	O	M	A	T	O	■	■	E	T	O	■	■	■	■
O	V	E	R	■	O	U	T	T	A	S	I	G	H	T
L	A	L	O	■	S	H	A	H	■	T	O	N	E	R
E	T	T	U	■	T	U	B	A	■	E	N	U	R	E
T	E	S	T	■	S	H	U	N	■	R	E	S	E	T

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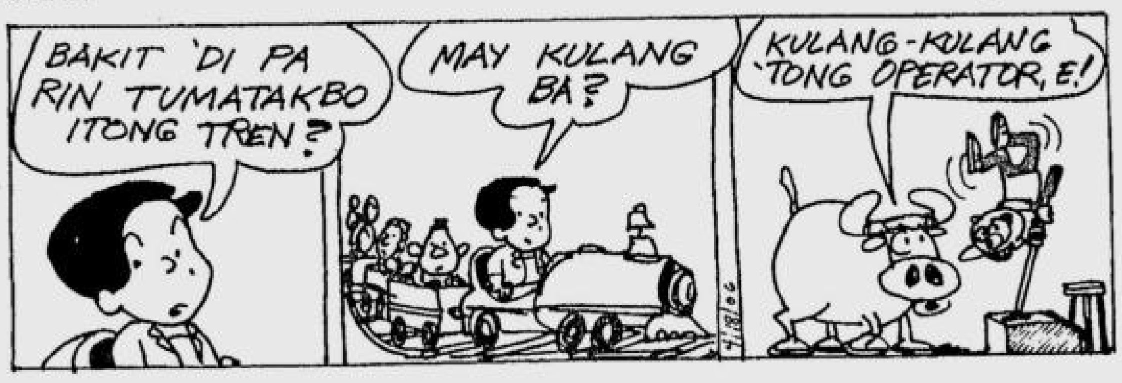
4/18/06

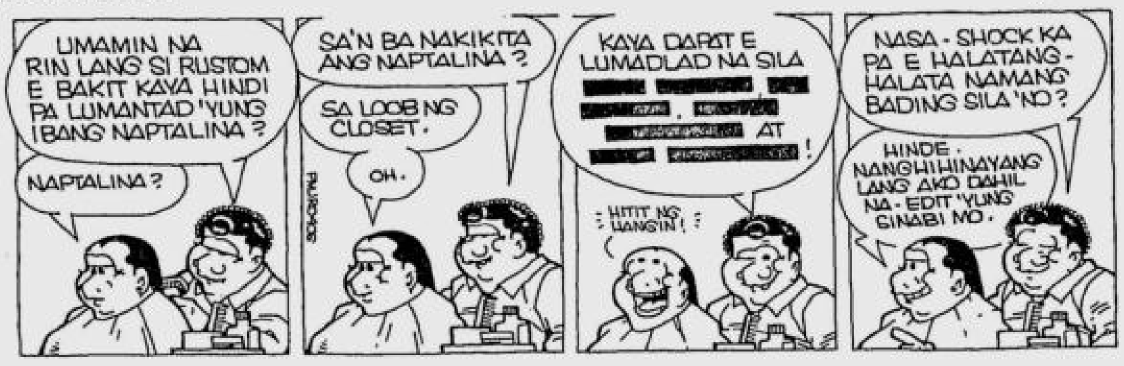
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


BAKIT 'DI PA RIN TUMATAKBO ITONG TREN?
MAY KULANG BA?
KULANG-KULANG 'TONG OPERATOR, E!
4/18/06

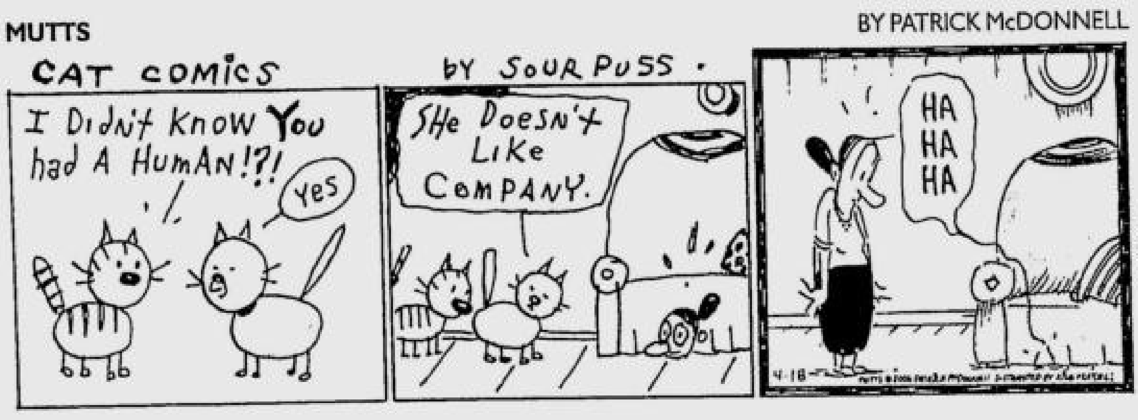
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


UMAMIN NA RIN LANG SI RUSTOM E BAKIT KAYA HINDI PA LUMANTAD 'YUNG IBANG NAPTALINA?
NAPTALINA?
SA'N BA NAKIKITA ANG NAPTALINA?
SA LOOB NG CLOSET.
OH.
KAYA DAPAT E LUMADLAD NA SILA [redacted] AT [redacted]!
HITIT NG HANGIN!
NASA-SHOCK KA PA E HALATANG-HALATA NAMANG BADING SILA 'NO?
HINDE. NANGHIHINAYANG LANG AKO DAHIL NA-EDIT 'YUNG SINABI MO.

MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


CAT COMICS
by SOUR PUSS.
I Didn't Know You had A HumAN!?!
YES
SHe Doesn't Like ComPANY.
HA HA HA
4-18

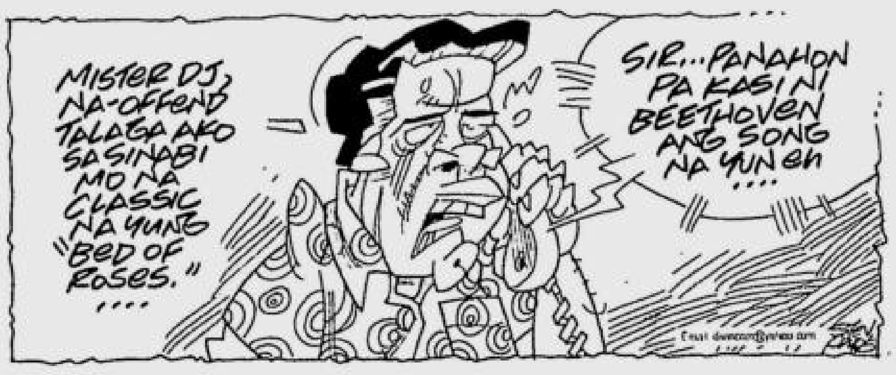
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS

ALAM MONG TUMATANDA KA NA KUNG

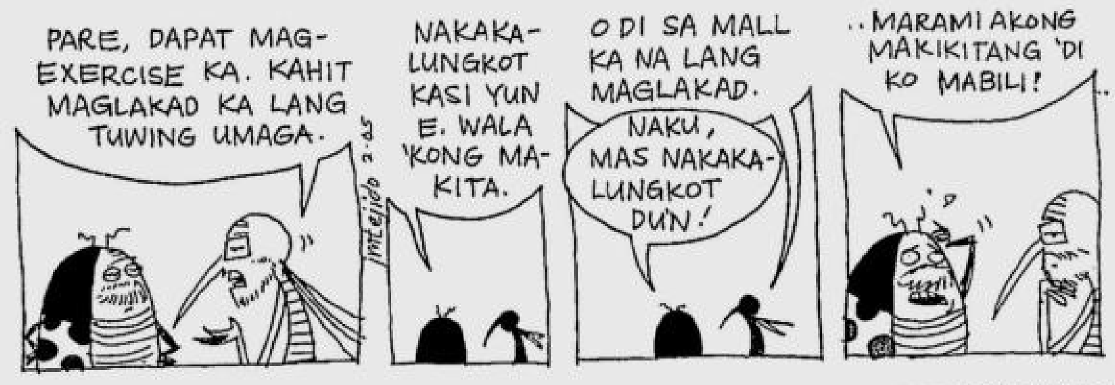
....

TINATAWAG NANG "CLASSIC" NG D.J. ANG PABORITO MONG KANTA


MISTER DJ, NA-OFFEND TALAGA AKO SA SINABI MO NA CLASSIC NA YUNG "BED OF ROSES." ....
SIR... PANAHON PA KASI NI BEETHOVEN ANG SONG NA YUN EH ....

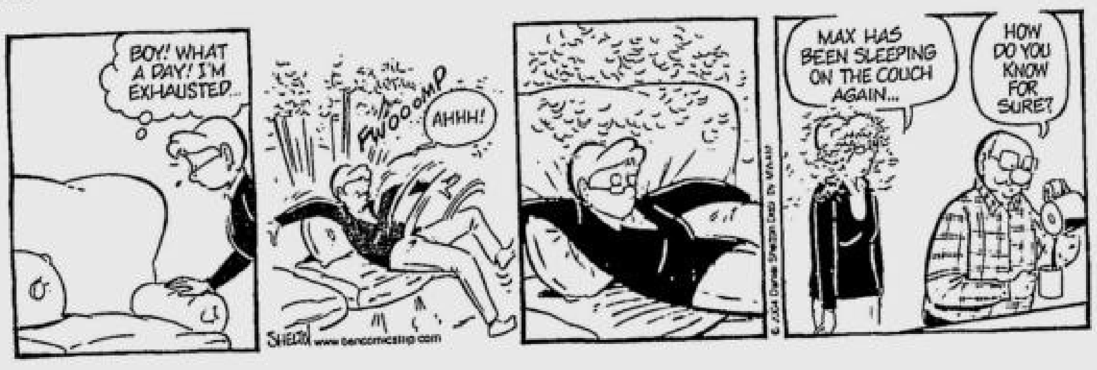
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PARE, DAPAT MAG-EXERCISE KA. KAHIT MAGLAKAD KA LANG TUWING UMAGA.
NAKAKA-LUNGKOT KASI YUN E. WALA 'KONG MA-KITA.
O DI SA MALL KA NA LANG MAGLAKAD.
NAKU, MAS NAKAKA-LUNGKOT DU'N!
..MARAMI AKONG MAKIKITANG 'DI KO MABILI!

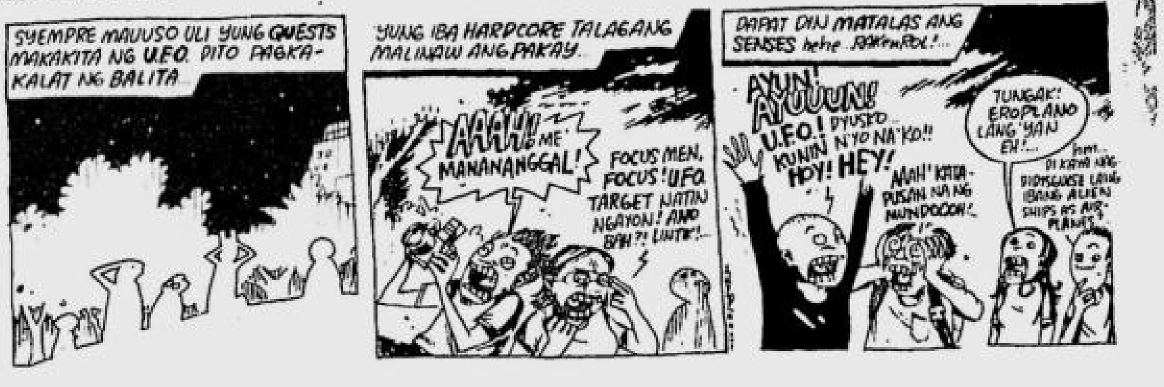
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


BOY! WHAT A DAY! I'M EXHAUSTED...
FWOOOMP
AHHH!
MAX HAS BEEN SLEEPING ON THE COUCH AGAIN...
HOW DO YOU KNOW FOR SURE?
SHELTON www.bencomicstrip.com

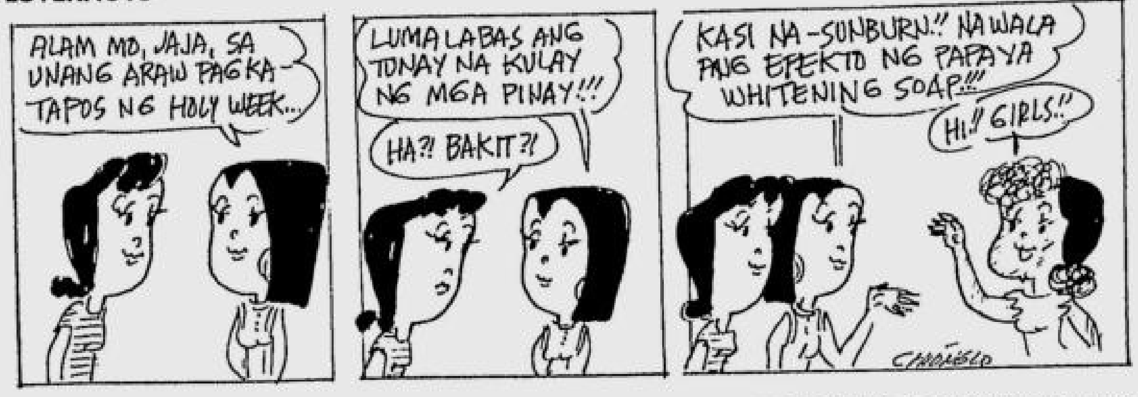
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


SYEMPRE MAUUSO ULI YUNG QUESTS MAKAKITA NG U.F.O. DITO PAGKA-KALAT NG BALITA...
YUNG IBA HARDCORE TALAGANG MALINAW ANG PAKAY.
AAAH! ME MANANANGGAL!
FOCUS MEN, FOCUS! U.F.O. TARGET NATIN NGAYON! AND BAH?! LINTEK!
DAPAT DIN MATALAS ANG SENSES hehe RAKenROL!...
AYUN! AYUUUN! U.F.O.! DYUSKO KUNIN N'YO NA 'KO!! HOY! HEY!
MAH' KATA-PUSAN NA NG MUNDOOOH!
TUNGAK! EROPLANO LANG 'YAN EH!...

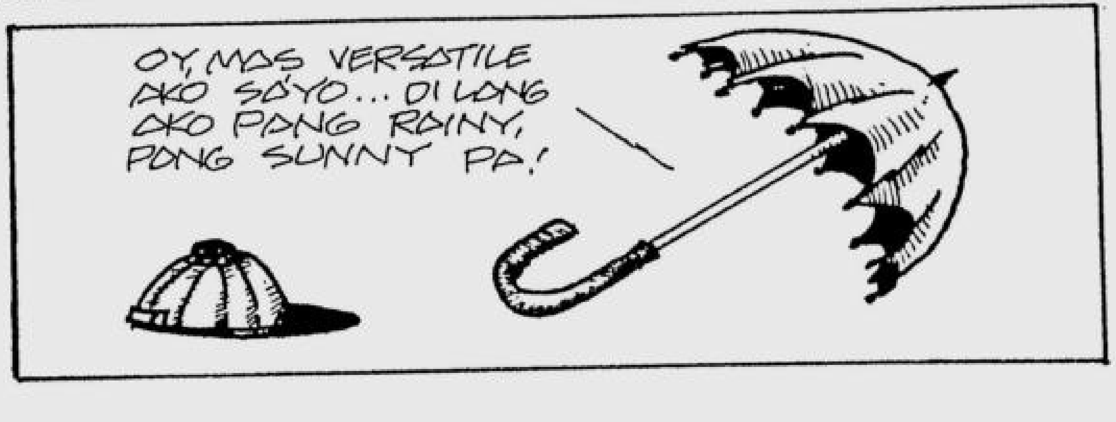
LOVEKNOTS

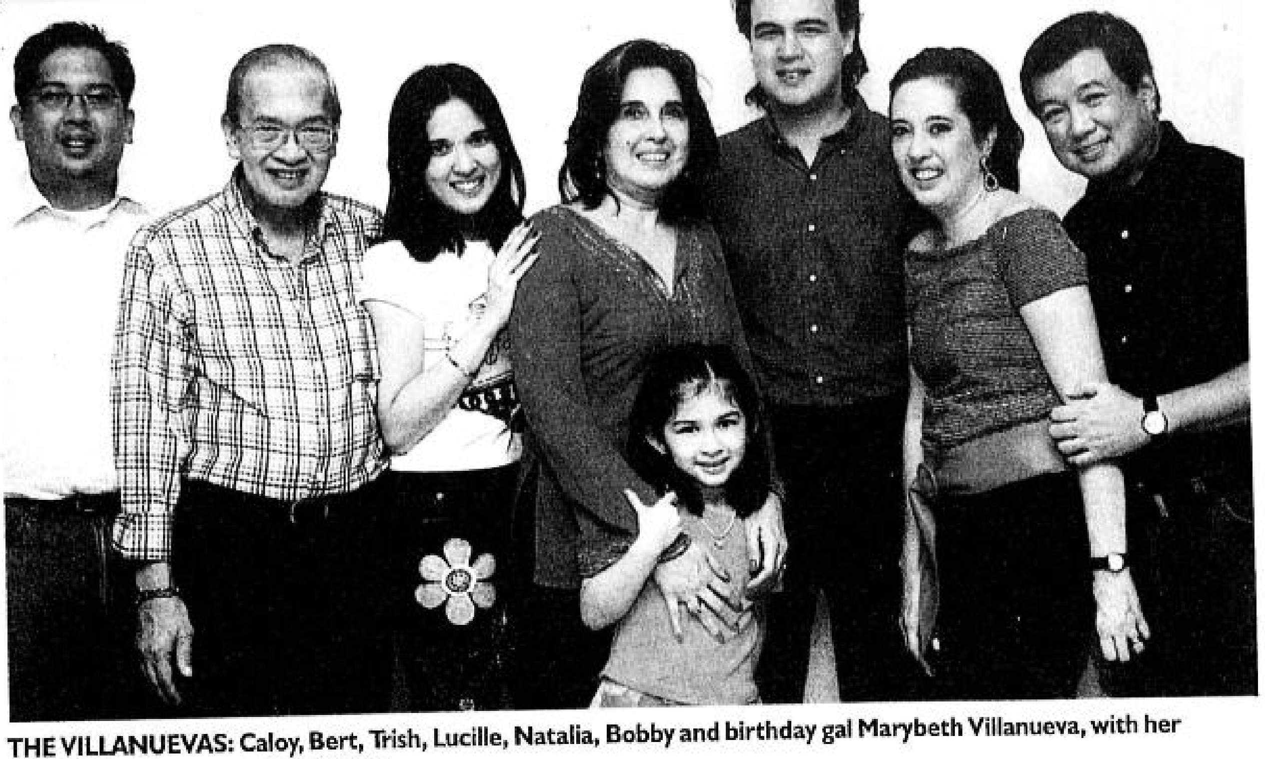
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ALAM MO, JAJA, SA UNANG ARAW PAGKA-TAPOS NG HOLY WEEK...
LUMALABAS ANG TUNAY NA KULAY NG MGA PINAY!!!
HA?! BAKIT?!
KASI NA-SUNBURN!! NAWALA PANG EPEKTO NG PAPAYA WHITENING SOAP!!!
HI!! GIRLS!!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


OY, MAS VERSATILE AKO SA'YO... DI LANG AKO PANG RAINY, PANG SUNNY PA!



THE VILLANUEVAS: Caloy, Bert, Trish, Lucille, Natalia, Bobby and birthday gal Marybeth Villanueva, with her husband, businessman Jerry Kilayko

NIKKI Prieto-Teodoro, Alex Revilla and Kiko Laurel

SEATED: Ponggay Kilayko, Elise Torrejon and Binky Kilayko. **Standing:** Inday Ruiz de Luzurriaga and Marybeth

CLEM Poblete, Joey Mabilangan and Paul Gordon

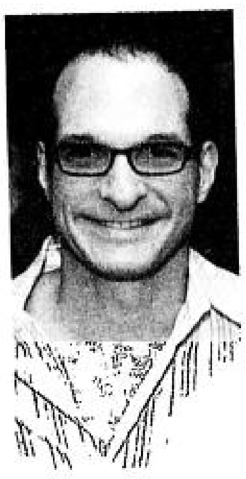
JUNIE and Fern Peña

Reliving the fab '80s

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

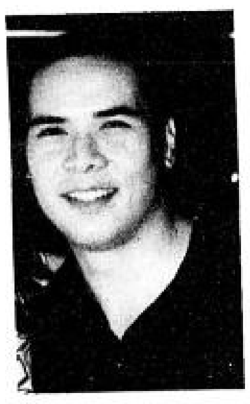
Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using **Kodak** EasyShare system



SANTI Picornell

DINKY Santos



GOOD-LOOKING Miguel Villanueva

THE GRAND, FUN BIRTHDAY BASH OF popular, vivacious **Marybeth Villanueva Kilayko** at North Forbes Park Pavilion on Pandan Road relived the fab decade of the '80s.

Marybeth welcomed her invitees in a cool '80s blouse from talented **Paul Cabral** with heirloom earrings from paternal grandmother **Cora Grau-Villanueva.**

Schoolmates from the International School, the College of Notre Dame, Belmont California and De la Salle University were there, *palanggas*.

Younger brother **Bobby V.** jetted in from Australia and high school pal **Margie "Kay" Ng-Yenko** flew in from Singapore with husband, businessman **Robert N.Y.**

Among the 120 fun personas at the party were **Eric Domingo, Joy Rojas, Winston Mapua, Gabs** and **Cecile Villanueva, Gina Villanueva, Tony Legarda, Philip Cuazon Jr., Tess Santos,** and **Mars Chua.**

Also there were **Margie Duavit, Chris Santiago, Buda Nubla, Noel Silva, Maridol** and **Raul Ylanan, Eugene Tamesis, Norman Salonga, Carlo Lopez, Eddielu** and **Nicole Ramirez, Mel Bate, Rowena Cuyco, Len** and **Dino Ampil, Jeanne** and **Raul Romulo,** and **Marvee Celi** with her fiancé, **Franz.**

Entertaining the guests were the celebrator's husband, businessman **Jerry Kilayko;** her father, business magnate **Bert Villanueva** and wife, vivacious entrepreneur **Lucille Raymond;** brothers **Bobby** and **Caloy;** and sister **Trish,** with cute daughter **Natalia.**

Apres the yummy dinner, it was time to party till 3 a.m., dahlings.

Challenge

The chi-chi Manila Polo Club Cogon Village buzzed with energy, *palanggas*, when the world-renowned HSBC hosted the "Charity Challenge for the Children's Hour" featuring Charity Triathlon, Charity Fair and Charity Jam.

Hotshot personalities in business, sports, government, retail and entertainment did their share for Children's Hour, a fundraising and grant-giving project that asks individuals and companies to donate one hour's worth of earnings to programs for marginalized Filipino children.

The past three years, gentleman for all seasons and HSBC hot, hot persona **Warner Manning** lost weight, ran a marathon and led a duathlon to collect over P1 million in pledges for Children's Hour.

This year, Warner M. and 32 sports enthusiasts swam, biked and ran. They included pretty-as-a-picture Sen. **Pia Cayetano;** Alaska's hunk **Fred Uytengsu;** Ayala Land's slim **Fernando Zobel; Art Tan** of Integrated Microelectronic; ABS-CBN's cool couple, **Ernie Lopez** and wife **Jeena Llamas;** Unilab's **Joey Torres;** Print Town's hotshot **Dennis Valdes** and wife, Urban Spa's multifaceted woman **Tessa Prieto;** McKinsey CEO **Chris Beshourie;** Photo Depot Inc.'s **Peter Yabut;** Macondray's **Jay Jay de Ocampo; Andy Aguila;** HSBC's **Paolo Layug, Peter Lopez, Joseph Concepcion** and **Ronnie Tinio; Rick Yupangco** of Ayala Land; and **Maxi Abad** of Associated Marine Officers and Seamen's Union of the Philippines.

Winners were **Jon Jon Rufino,** Ayala Land's **Nona Torres** and ANC's **Tricia Chiongbian.**

The Charity Fair featured creations from **Tina Ansaldo,** who sold her exquisite evening bags; **Anton Barretto,** who brought items from Pineapple; **Ria Francisco Prieto's** Label Manila shoes; and **Dita Sandico Ong's** *abaca* wraps.

Young designers had fashion stalls and **Barni Alejandro** of the Sexy Chefs demonstrated South Beach Diet recipes. **Marta Matute** brought cookies and cupcakes. Auctioned were shirts designed by exotic **Rissa Mananquil Samson, Alessa Libongco** and **Pops Fernandez.**

Retailers like Gourdo's, L'Oreal and Rustan's Essenses were also there.

The Charity Jam featured a mini concert by performers like **Kuh Ledesma,** Pops Fernandez, **RJ Jacinto, Richard Merk, Pinky Amador, Jon Santos, Jeffrey Hidalgo,** Hong Kong Holiday and **Francis Ong.**

HSBC CEO Warner Manning proudly announced P2.2 million was raised. "The generosity and enthusiasm of many individuals have made this Charity Challenge a success... This was definitely time well spent."

Beneficiaries include Stepping Stone Learning Center for Special Children, Sa Aklat Sisikat, Gawad Eskwela, Gilas, Send a Tribal Kid to School, and e=MC2.

Romantic phones

The Prince of Alta Moda, **Inno Sotto,** launched the latest trendy mobile phones, the Nokia L'Amour Collection—7360, 7370 and 7380—at The Tent at the Fort, "infusing cultural and ethnic influences with luxurious touches of the unexpected," *palanggas*.

Inno Sotto read a piece about love and its influences "in life, work, and one's choices in life," with stage actors **Joel Trinidad** and **Shereen Saiyed** playing out the story.

The superb cocktail food, downed with pricey champagne, was prepared by **Margarita Fores** .

Maricris Sarino, Kalorino Katna and **Andy Santalan** won Nokia phones in the raffle.

Well-respected Nokia country general manager **Parikshit Bhasin** and his super nice wife, **Jini,** led the happening.

Present were Globe Telecom's **Andrew Buay** and **Ferdz de la Cruz, Jay Lagdameo, Dick Perez, Louis Ang,** Smart's **Dan Ybarra, Mellie Ablaza,** and **Sari Yap.**

SISTERS Franchesca and Amanda Carpo, with PDI chair Marixi Rufino Prieto and Kit Kat Zobel

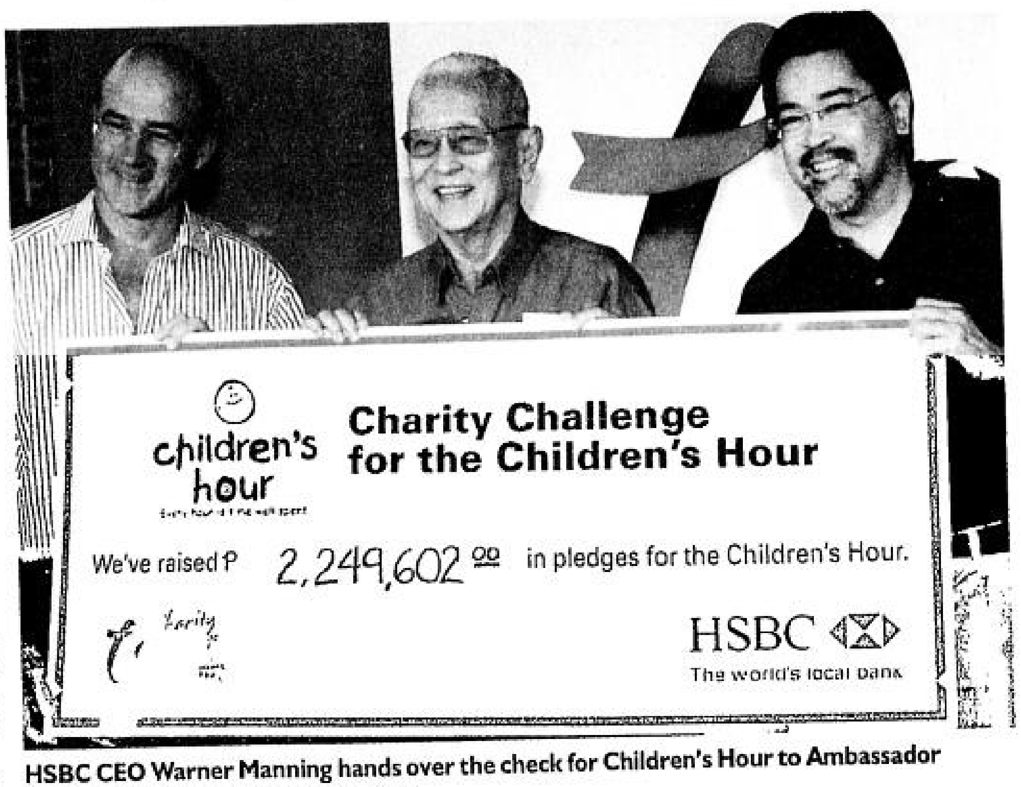
METROPOLITAN Museum's Ino Manalo

children's
hour

JULIE Manning (second from right), with Paqui Ortigas and Menchu and Quinito Henson

LIZZIE Zobel and daughter, with Margarita Delgado

ENTANG Carballo with Natalia Villanueva, Quito Moras, Bobby Villanueva, Jojo Manosa, Marybeth V. Kilayko and Tessie Amparo

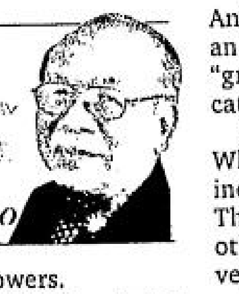


HSBC CEO Warner Manning hands over the check for Children's Hour to Ambassador Bienvenido Tan Jr. and Guillermo Luz.

Do dogs go to heaven?

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco



READER JO FUCIO (e-mail: jofucio@yahoo.com) sent the following letter with interesting questions about dogs and the afterlife:

"I had a 3-month-old pup that died of viral infection [recently]. I miss him already... I hope you'll be able to help me understand things, because I want to know if our pup still exists or not. Of course, I want him to be happy in heaven with God.

"1. Do dogs have a soul? (I believe every living creature God created has soul but do dogs really have a soul?)

"2. Do they get to heaven?

"3. Do they have memories of their owners when they are already in heaven? Do they miss their owners?

"4. When our pup died, its eyes were open. The vets couldn't close them. When my father arrived after a few minutes, he was able to close them. Could it be that our pup didn't want to go? Or did he want to see us before he went? (Maybe there is a scientific basis for this. I don't know.)

"5. I remember when our pup died, I turned on the lights in our garage. His food container fell to the ground. I thought it could be him. He's letting me know he's just around. Could it be him?

"6. Do they watch over their owners? Could he be around the house visiting us? Or in the car? Because we used to bring him on our trips.

"7. We miss our pup a lot. We always mention his name, look for him and we hold his toy when we miss him. Could he sense that we miss him? Does it make him sad?

"8. Can we meet in heaven someday? (I'm aware all of us will die.)

"I hope I didn't make you laugh with my questions. I believe we communicate in some ways."

Answers

Here are my answers to your questions:

1. According to one school of philosophy, all living things have a soul because the soul is defined as the "principle of life." However, souls differ in terms of function or powers.

For example, the soul of a plant is vegetative. It can only reproduce and grow. It has no sensation. (However, this last statement was challenged by the findings of polygraph expert Cleve Backster, who proved that plants had emotions or feelings.)

Animals have what is called a sentient soul. It can reproduce, grow, move and have sensations.

Human beings have a rational soul. In addition to the above powers, they can think and reason, although most don't.

Another distinction made among different types of souls is that a plant soul simply dissolves when the plant dies. Animal soul has no individuality. When an animal dies, the soul goes back to a "group soul." There are group souls of cats, dogs, chickens.

Only human souls have individuality. When a human being dies, it retains its individual character in the afterlife. That's the theory. There are, of course, other views regarding this that I am not very familiar with.

2. I do not know whether dogs go to what Christians call "heaven." You must realize that the concept of heaven is not held by other religions.

3. Some domesticated animals, because of their closeness to their human masters, acquire a certain degree of individuation. And when they die, they can be seen or felt by the owner. Clairvoyants have seen dogs who have already died for several years inside the house of their masters. So it is possible that when the master dies, he or she will meet the same dog.

4. I will not give any other meaning to your dog's eyes being open when it died. Some people die with eyes open, too.

5. Yes, it is possible the consciousness of your dog is still there in the place where he used to stay. As I pointed out, some people had seen spirits of their dogs in their homes. One was even photographed. The image of the dead dog appeared on the wall behind its master whose picture was taken. See my book "Ghosts in Photos" (Anvil).

6. This question is already answered. In one case, I was told, the feces of the dead dog was found outside the kitchen door after he died. That's where the dog used to defecate when it was alive. It happened twice. Then no more.

7. It is possible your dog senses your concern if it has acquired a high degree of individuation. You will most likely meet again in the afterlife.

By the way, this column comes out in the Lifestyle Section of Philippine Daily Inquirer on Tuesday, not Thursday. You can read this column, as well as other columns, on the Internet by logging in to www.inq7.net, then click Lifestyle.

Mastering life's pluses and minuses

"In order to create there must be a dynamic force, and what force is more potent than love?"

–Igor Stravinsky

THE CHINESE CHARACTER FOR CRISIS means both peril and opportunity. And it carries a message for everyone in crisis. It's time to act so blessings will come.

Most people, when they find life's many changing situations overwhelming, feel oppressed, depressed or repressed. That is because there is an inherent human need, a basic instinct, as it were, to be in control. And when one is not, s/he feels stressed.

Good news

So much has been written about mastering one's life. There are various paths, from thinking positive to mind dynamics to spiritual surrender and many more.

But the best news of all, the key to getting your life back on track, is to put yourself together again, just like Humpty Dumpty. The strangest thing is, to mend you, you've got to be broken. Why break in the first place?

According to Mary Carroll Moore, in her book "How To Master Change In Your Life," "Failure doesn't mean that either you or the goal is flawed, ...(it) might just mean you need to change direction, make an adjustment."

Exercise

Get a clean piece of paper or write in your journal. Draw a line in the middle of the page, making two columns. Write on top of one column, "can control"; the other, "cannot control."

Now assess yourself. Imagine things you would like to do, and the activities you can do. There are situations in your life that need an honest review. Write them down. Explain how each situation turned you into an optimist or a pessimist. And why you felt victimized.

Note how you handled your past experiences, some well, others not so well. And how you could have been in better control. In the final analysis, a victim is a victim because s/he allowed a certain situation to rule him/her.

INSIDE OUT

Cory Quirino

The future

Psychotherapists say the only matter holding back people from their dreams is their fear. This force, whose exact opposite is love, has the power to paralyze and make impotent many a person's highest expectations.

Try this visualization and writing exercise:

- Close your eyes.
- Imagine yourself five years from now. Now project your goals as fulfilled. If you see yourself as a happily married woman with seven kids, then hold on to the vision. Or if you see yourself driving around in your new BMW or dream car, then enjoy the ride!

This exercise is powerful because it immediately attacks the fear and literally obliterates it.

- Now from the future, work backward. See the things that need to be done for you to fulfill your heart's desires. You will realize that the pressure to achieve your goal is dissipated. It has been defanged because it can no longer be fueled by fear. Once the pressure is lifted, the fear will vanish.
- Now, suggest to yourself one specific action needed for your dreams to happen. See yourself doing it.

This exercise teaches you optimism, strength and persistence. It tells you that things can be done if you want them to happen.

In the final analysis, the people who say they cannot will definitely fail. Why? Because they told themselves they "cannot" even before they got started.

- You can have short-term goals and long-term dreams.

Visualize

In any of the exercises, do you see yourself as healthy, happy, successful, peaceful, fulfilled rather than sick, sad, broke and restless? If so, then you have chosen the right road to mastering the positives and negatives of life. From now on, you can count more pluses than minuses.

To-do list

- Start the day with your health/wellness in mind.
- Remove from your drawers and cabinets all expired medicines and cosmetics.
- Take a lukewarm glass of water to cleanse and rehydrate you. Follow with a vegetable juice (carrot/sugar beet, carrot/apple are some of my favorites).
- Do seven slow, deep breathing exercises. Close your eyes and visualize a sunrise.
- Claim the sunrise.

Love and light!

For Smart subscribers, text CQ 2966 - Health and Beauty Updates.

Portion size matters

NUTRITIONIST SANIROSE ORBETA once said the term "one cup of rice" had a different meaning for different people. "One cup" can mean anything from a dainty teacup to a large bowl. This can mean all the difference in weight control since a teacup of rice has less calories than a big bowl.

This is why Orbeta uses plastic models of food to teach people how a portion size should look to control weight successfully.

"Portion control" is an old-fashioned term like "counting calories," but it is coming back in vogue.

A 2004 study published in Obesity Research Journal found that controlling portion size was the single most effective method of losing weight and keeping it off.

Participants in the study were followed up for two years after they started a weight-loss program. The people who actively practiced portion control lost 5 percent or more body weight. Those who did not, gained 5 percent or more.

Underestimation

A study done at the St. Luke-Roosevelt Hospital Obesity Research Center found that many obese people who claimed to have "slow metabolism" underestimated the amount of food they actually ate (they also overestimated the amount of exercise they did). Some people thought they were eating 1,000 calories when they were really eating 2,000 calories.

Joan Horbiak, a registered dietician at Duke University, told Glamour Magazine how a client was convinced she was eating cereals worth only 250-300 calories every morning. The actual figure was 900 calories because of a huge cereal bowl. Horbiak said people filled whatever vessel they were using at the moment and called that "one serving."

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

Size does matter

Many people don't like to be told they have to control the amount of food they eat for long-term weight control. They would rather eat food low in fat or low in carbohydrates so they can eat as much as they want. But size does matter.

Too much of anything leads to weight gain. The only exception perhaps is vegetables, which are so low in calories and which few people would have too much of.

Large portion sizes are cited as one of the factors for rising obesity rates in the US and other westernized countries. As nutritionist Marion Nestle of the New York University said, "Super-sized portions can create super-sized people."

Handy tips

Unless you walk around with a measuring cup and weighing scale, you may lose track of how much you are eating. Using your hand as a visual aid is a practical way (you never leave your hands at home) to calculate how many cups of pasta are on that big plate. These guidelines are true for most women's hands. (Source: American Dietetic Association)

- 1 oz nuts – 1 handful
- 1 oz chips or pretzels – 1 large handful or 2 small handfuls
- 1 c dry cereal – 1 large handful
- ¾ c hot cereal – fist or cupped hand
- ½ c rice – rounded handful
- ½ c cut fruit, cooked vegetables, pasta – fist
- 3 oz meat, poultry or fish – open palm
- 1 oz cheese – thumb
- 1 tsp butter, mayonnaise – thumb tip (measure from tip of thumbnail to first joint)
- 1 tbsp butter, mayonnaise – 3 thumb tips

Other visual aids

Common household items can also help you visualize portion sizes.

- Tennis ball – half a cup of cooked pasta
- Half a tennis ball – half a cup of rice
- Baseball – 1 c cooked vegetables
- Large marble – 1 oz cheese or peanut butter
- Matchbox – 1 oz chocolate
- Deck of cards – 3 oz meat
- 1 ping-pong ball – 2 tbsp salad dressing
- Ice cream scoop – ½ c mashed potatoes

Note: The Fitness Network Philippines (formerly AFPP) will hold a seminar on April 22. Tintin Bersola-Babao will present "Rebounding." Get details at 9202762 or 0917-5181202 or www.fitnessphilippines.org

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info

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Take Charge Doc!

What are the symptoms of Leukemia?

Leukemic infiltration will result in bone marrow failure causing marked anemia (decrease in red blood cells), leukopenia (decrease in white blood cells), and thrombocytopenia (decrease in platelets) resulting in a diverse presentation which includes: fatigue, pallor, dyspnea on exertion from anemia; hemorrhage-bleeding from thrombocytopenia; and infection or fever from neutropenia (decrease in WBC-neutrophils). Leukemic cells may infiltrate many organs resulting in splenomegaly and hepatomegaly which can present as abdominal pain, bloatedness; hepatomegaly can bring about jaundice. It can also infiltrate the lymph nodes causing lymphadenopathy and leukemia cutis if with skin involvement. There may be gingival pain and hypertrophy as well as central nervous system involvement which can present as headache, dizziness, neurologic symptoms. Spontaneous tumor lysis syndrome may cause metabolic abnormalities of hyperuricemia (joint pains), hyperphosphatemia, hypocalcemia (stiffness), or hyperkalemia (weakness).

This week's answer to our feature question was provided by our medical service provider from Laguna, Dr. Carmella Lou A. Bingcang. Dra. Bingcang specializes in IM-Hematology. She finished her medical degree from West Visayas State University, Iloilo City in 1995. She took her residency training for Internal Medicine at The Doctors' Hospital Inc., Bacolod City in 2002 and further obtained her fellowship training for Hematology at St. Lukes Medical Center last year. She is an active member of the Philippine Society of Hematology & Blood Transfusion, Philippine Medical Association, Quezon City Medical Society and a diplomate of the Philippine College of Physicians. MEDICard members may visit her for consultation services at FortMed Medical Clinics-Sta Rosa Mondays 1pm-3pm and at Evangelista Medical Specialty Hospital, Mondays 9am-12noon.

MEDICard
Nicky

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

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EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Supine front leg lift

THIS EXERCISE STRENGTHENS the quadriceps (the muscles in the front of the thighs) as well as the abdominal muscles.

Equipment:

Exercise mat

Exercise technique:

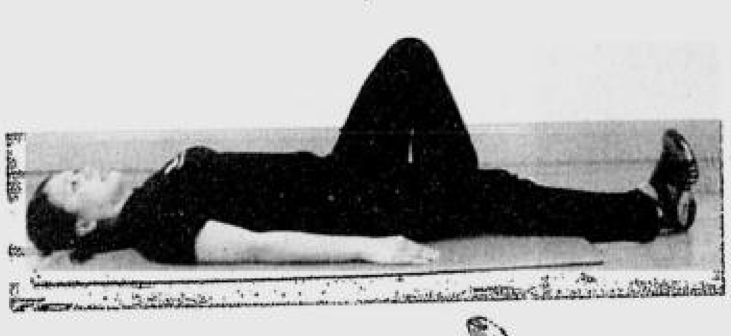
1. Lie down with one leg bent and the other one straight.
2. Tighten the abdominal muscles as you lift the straight leg toward the ceiling.
3. Keep control of the abs as you lower the leg.
4. Do the desired number of repetitions. Repeat on the other side.

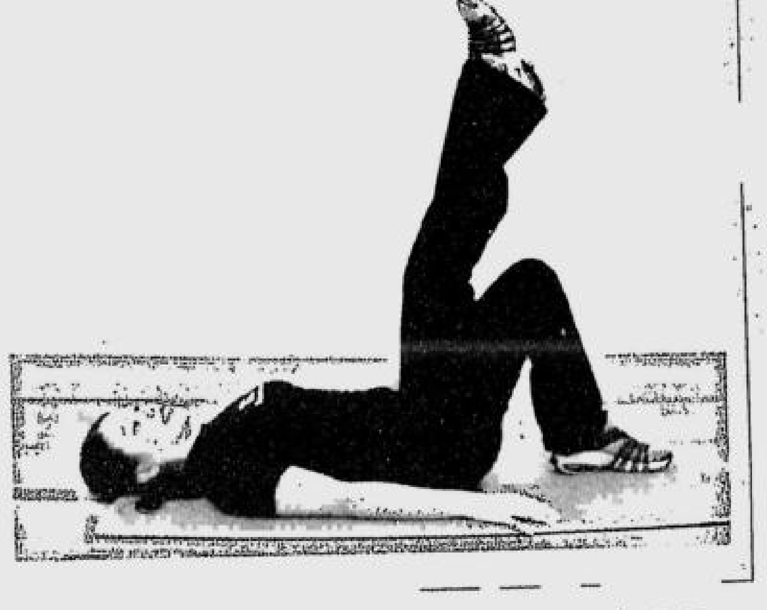
Performance tips:

1. Exhale as you lift the leg; inhale as you lower.
2. Make sure your lower back does not arch off the floor as you lower the leg down.
3. You can wear ankle weights for more of a challenge.

Repetitions:

Do five to 10 repetitions per leg.





Registration for adventure race ends April 29

REGISTRATION IS ONGOING FOR the 6th Guam Extreme Adventure Race (Gear), the only one of its kind held on the Micronesian island, to be held May 13.

Deadline for registration is April 29.

The race is open to teams of four—co-ed, all-female or all-male—who must stay together for the entire race. Activities include jungle trekking, mountain biking, coasteering, kayaking, orienteering and open ocean swimming. The race follows the 24-hour format.

Participants are expected from Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, and Saipan, as well as locals.

Contact James Oelke, Gear race director, at James_Oelke@hotmail.com, or call the Guam Visitors Bureau Philippine office at 7277755 and 7264277, or e-mail gvbphil@pldtdsl.net

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Parking on premises

START TODAY. FINISH BEFORE REGULAR CLASSES BEGIN.

Congratulations to Denille Lou Valmonte, Bb. Pilipinas International & Rosalyn Sirikit Santiago, 1st Runner-up Bb. Pilipinas 2006.